LA FILLE MAL GARDEE—full report

Dance and Dancers

MARCH 1960

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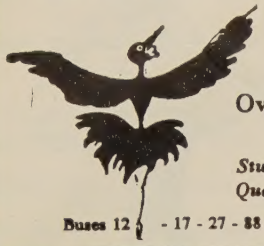

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Personality of the Month

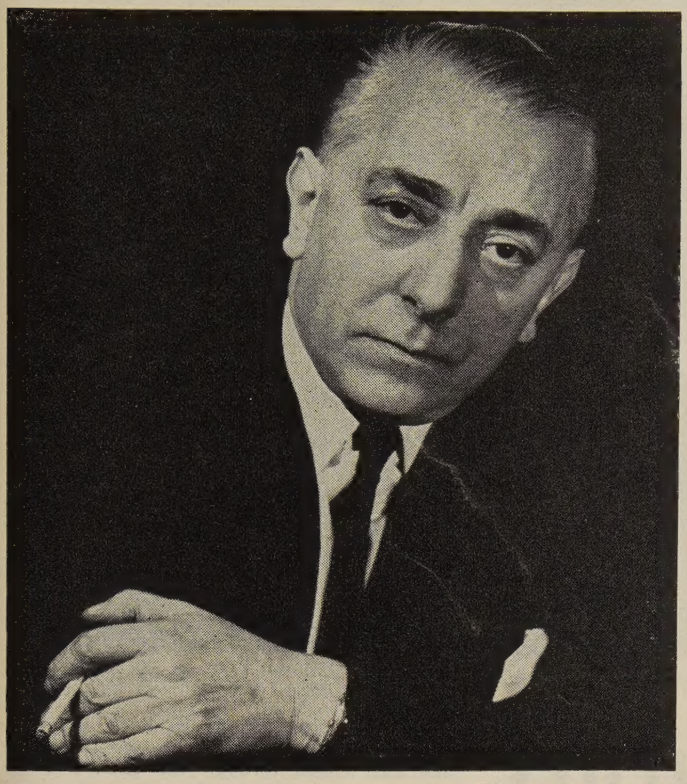

Photo : David Sim.

LEON HEPNER

WHO would be an impresario? No person in the theatre business comes in for more kicks in the teeth. The artists they present most often call them rogues and crooks ; the public, if a presentation flops, blame them, and if it is a success, ignore them completely. When anything goes wrong the continual cry is "It's the impresario's fault". Yet I just cannot see how we can ever do without them. Where for instance should we have been in London this winter without Leon Hepner, because without him the winter dancing would have been a very home-made business. Not that we have anything to be ashamed of when it comes to our home teams — we love them and we are proud of them. But a little foreign sauce peps-up any season, and it not only makes the season more spicy but it also inspires our local creators. Whatever the merits or demerits of Roland Petit's *Cyrano de Bergerac,* the Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company or the Zambra Flamenco Club of Madrid, the fact remains that owing to Leon Hepner they came and in various ways our lives have been enriched because of them.

At one time it was Peter Daubeny, with whom Leon Hepner was for several years associated, who brought all the notable foreign dance companies to London. Now he has deserted the dance completely in favour of the straight theatre — presenting both foreign and local products. Other impresarios have also dabbled, from time to time, in presenting foreign dance companies, but most of them lacked the know-how for this very special branch of theatre, and if they did not have an immediate success they dropped the dance like the most scalding of hot cakes. It needs years of working with ballet companies to know just how they should be presented, and Leon Hepner has had more years than most and, what is more, has been personally connected with the organization of several companies. During the war he was the director of the Anglo-Polish Ballet, then he organised several companies for E.N.S.A. After the war he organised Metropolitan Ballet in its early days and since then the companies he has been connected with in one way and another and the companies he has been partly or wholely responsible for bringing to England, when listed, would take up many columns of *Dance and Dancers.* It seems that in this tall dignified figure lies the future of most important foreign importations to this country which in itself adds vital pages to ballet history. This probably is some compensation for all those kicks that impresarios receive.

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Dance and Dancers

Editor: PETER WILLIAMS *Associate Editor:* CLIVE BARNES
Assistant Editor: E. C. Mason.

WORLD'S LARGEST SALE IN THE FIELD

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Last on the Bandwagon

THE whistle blows, steam puffs up from the engine and the train starts to move away from the platform. Some of us old fuddy-duddies who have been sitting back in our seats complacently settle in for the journey. The journey to where? Why, the journey that takes us forward to tomorrow — to new thought, to new trends in choreography, to new musical sounds and rhythms, to new horizons in painting and designing. But wait ! There is a scuffle on the platform and a group of people rush past the barrier and just manage to scramble into the last coach. These are the people who, having remained in their own tiny orbit for years, suddenly become aware of the fact that there is a movement somewhere and that they are getting left behind.

Once having settled in their last coach they hold banners out proclaiming their new sense of direction. "Forward ! Forward ! " they say, and " Death to dusty old ideas. From now on everything must be modern ". We old drearies in the forward coaches smile complacently because we know, don't we, that this railway line — the A.R.T. — has to keep moving. Neither forward nor backward but principally in a circle, a circle which gets a little larger each century. Smugly we admit that the word " modern " is but a mirage because in this old world most of what is to be written, painted, composed, choreographed or danced has all been done before — and will be done again. But the new converts in the last coach pay no heed — " Forward ! Forward ! " they shriek monotonously. Suddenly their noise is stilled because the train comes to a puffing halt at the station where they started from — it is called *La Fille Mal Gardée.*

To the horror of the last coach all the rest of the passengers are happy to alight, for a while, at this station. For the last coach, in face of this general jubilation, there is no alternative but to follow suit. Gritting their teeth they descend and reluctantly join with the rest, poor things.

Now the moral of all this and of Frederick Ashton's triumphantly successful production of Europe's oldest ballet, *La Fille Mal Gardée,* is that it's no good thinking you can slavishly only adhere to one side labelled " classical " or to another labelled " modern ". One is a development of the other and they are both a part of the same thing. In a century, any steps onward can only be of the slightest, and by developing an old classic, Ashton has created something very " modern " — if you *must* use the word.

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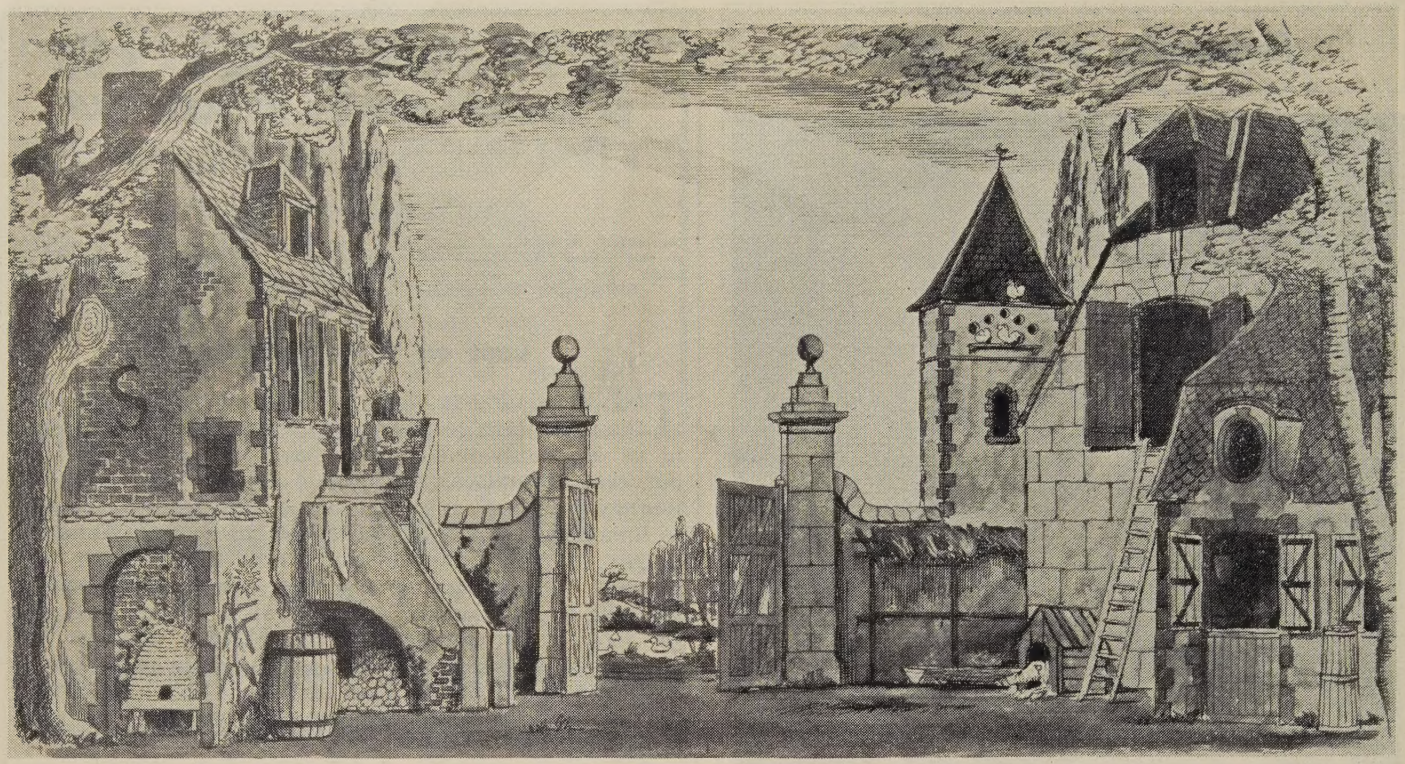


FIRST ACT DESIGN: Osbert Lancaster's original design for the opening scene which was altered very slightly in the realisation.

La Fille Mal Gardée

First given by the Royal Ballet at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, on January 28, 1960. Choreography by Frederick Ashton. Music by Ferdinand Hérold freely adapted and arranged by John Lanchbery. Designs by Osbert Lancaster.

CAST

Widow Simone, a rich farmer ..... STANLEY HOLDEN
Lise, her daughter ..... NADIA NERINA
Colas, a young farmer in love with Lise ..... DAVID BLAIR
Thomas, a prosperous vineyard owner ..... LESLIE EDWARDS
Alain, his son ..... ALEXANDER GRANT
A Village Notary ..... FRANKLIN WHITE
His Secretary ..... MAURICE METLISS
Cockerel and Hens ..... LAWRENCE RUFFELL, MARGARET LYONS, ROBIN HAIG, MAUREEN MAITLAND, GLORIA BLUEMEL

Corps de Ballet of *Villagers, Harvesters, Grooms, etc.*

STORY

Act 1, scene 1 — The Farmyard

"LISE, the only daughter of Simone, a widow and owner of a prosperous farm, is in love with Colas, a young farmer, but her mother has far more ambitious plans.

"The dawn of a busy day on the farm is heralded by the cock and his attendant hens. Lise, disappointed at not seeing Colas, leaves a ribbon tied in a lover's knot, as a token of her devotion. He finds it and binds it to his staff. The lovers meet, but are interrupted by Simone, who sets her daughter a task churning butter. Colas in hiding in the loft joins her. The work is shared and then forgotten as they declare their love.

"The farm girls summon Lise to play, but her mind is elsewhere. Her suspicious and ever-watchful mother catches hold of her and chastises her. Just then Thomas, the pompous and wealthy proprietor of a vineyard, arrives with his son Alain. Simone, aware of their mission, dismisses Lise. Thomas asks her hand for his son, and when Lise returns Alain, coy and clumsy, shows off his paces. She is amused and a little shocked by his antics, but definitely not interested. They set off for the harvest.

Scene II — The Cornfield

"IT is harvest time, and after working in the fields the harvesters, led by Colas, relax in a joyful dance. Lise and Alain dance, but Colas intervenes, and the young girl makes it clear where her preference lies. One of the harvesters plays the flute to the general merriment, and Alain thinks he will take a turn, but the harvesters mock him and he is rescued from their horseplay by his indignant father.

"The field is now left clear for the triumphant Colas, who dances with Lise. Simone joins in the merriment. But suddenly they are interrupted by a storm that drenches them, scattering them far and wide.

Act II — Interior of the Farm

"MOTHER and daughter, soaked by the storm, return to the farm house. They sit down to spin; work, thinks the mother, should keep Lise out of mischief. But she is overcome by sleep, and Lise, who has seen Colas through the gate, tries to take the key from her. Simone awakes, and in order to remain watchful, plays the tambourine for Lise to dance. But the taps grow feebler, she begins to nod, and now she is fast asleep. Lise runs to the door and makes love to Colas through the unfriendly bars. The knocking of the harvesters, coming for their pay, awakens Simone. Colas enters with them and conceals himself behind a pile of straw. Simone tells her daughter to get on with her chores as she leaves to give the harvesters a drink. Lise, thinking she is alone, dreams of the delights of married life. Colas cannot resist, and comes out from hiding. She is bashful at having been taken by surprise, but once again they declare their love, exchanging scarves as a token.

"As Simone reappears, Lise hustles Colas into her bedroom. The ever-suspicious mother realises that the lovers have been meeting, and in her turn hustles Lise into the bedroom, locking the door.

"Alain and his father now arrive with a notary to complete the contract. When it is signed Simone hands Alain the bedroom key. After a moment of idiotic indecision, he opens the door, and to everyone's dismay, Colas and Lise emerge. The lovers fall on their knees to ask Simone for forgiveness and a blessing. In spite of the fury of Thomas and Alain, urged on by the notary and villagers, she finally gives in amidst general rejoicing."

INTRODUCTION

LA FILLE MAL GARDEE is one of the most famous of all ballets; it is also one of the oldest, being created around the same time as Galleotti's *The Whims of Cupid and The Ballet Master*. But whereas the Galleotti ballet has had a continuous tradition of revival, if not of performance, at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen, and it may be supposed that a fair amount of

Galleotti's original choreography survives, Dauberval's original version of *La Fille Mal Gardée* is utterly lost, except for the name and the story.

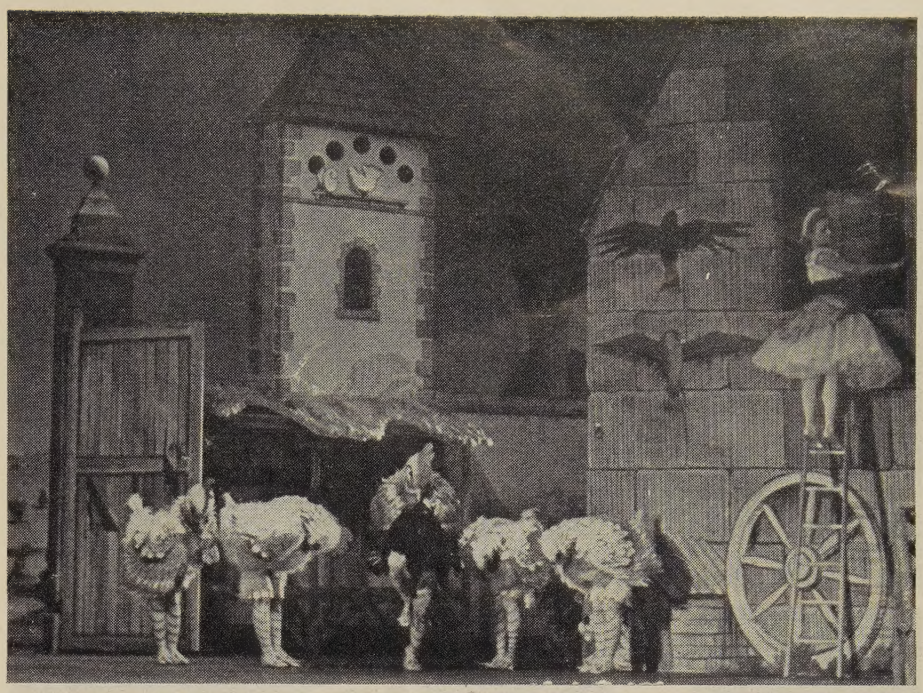
Jean Bercher Dauberval was a pupil of the great Noverre. According to Charles Maurice's *Histoire Anécdotique du Théâtre,* quoted by Cyril Beaumont in *The Complete Book of Ballets,* the ballet originated one day when Dauberval chanced to glance in a glazier's shop window and saw " a crude coloured print depicting a village youth fleeing from a cottage, with an angry old woman throwing his hat after him, while a peasant girl shed tears. At the end of a very short interval the ravishing ballet *La Fille Mal Gardée* was evolved."

In Beaumont's account the ballet was originally produced in 1786 "during a touring visit to London and was given at the Grand Theatre, Bordeaux in 1789, under the title of *Le Ballet de la Paille, ou il n'est qu'un pas du mal au bien.*" Ivor Guest, who has contributed a most useful programme note for this new Covent Garden production, claims that the Bordeaux performance on July 1, 1789 was in fact the ballet's première. He says that the first London performance took place on April 30, 1791 at the Pantheon Theatre.

Certainly, as Deryck Lynham confirms in his biography *Novere,* the ballet was given at the Pantheon on that date as one of the attractions presented by Mr. O'Reilly of *Prospect Before Us* fame. For his earlier date Beaumont in *The Complete Book* offers no London theatre, and nothing more than the year of creation. On the other hand, Guest is very emphatic about the changed date. In the immensely valuable appendices to his book *The Romantic Ballet in England,* Guest's check-lists make it clear that *La Fille Mal Gardée* could not have been given at the King's Theatre. However, his check-lists of ballets performed at other London theatres during this period does not start until O'Reilly's season at the Pantheon in 1791. Nevertheless the overwhelming likelihood seems to be that Guest's chronology is correct. At the Pantheon performance the two lovers were danced by Dauberval's wife, Mme. Theodore and Charles Didelot.

The original score for the ballet was a potpourri of popular tunes, presumably arranged by a member of the Bordeaux Orchestra. When the ballet was first given by Dauberval in Paris — probably at the Porte St. Martin Theatre — this original Bordeaux score was used, but when, after the death of the choreographer, a revised version was prepared by one of his pupils, Jean Aumer, for the Paris Opéra, the composer Ferdinand Hérold was brought in to revise the music. Hérold retained some of the best of the original numbers, added a few more, and further gingered up the score with pirate versions of Rossini's overture to *The Barber of Seville* and also the storm from Rossini's *La Cenerentola.* The ballet was first given at the Opéra on November 17, 1828, with Pauline Montessu as Lise. In 1837 in Paris Fanny Elssler danced Lise for the first time, and a new *pas de deux* was included to a selection of music stolen from Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'Amore.*

La Fille Mal Gardée was first produced in Russia by Charles Didelot, who had become a great choreographer in his own right. Using the original "Bordeaux" score he mounted the ballet in either 1817 (according to Lifar's *History of Russian Ballet*) or 1818 (according to Ivor Guest). In 1848 Fanny Elssler danced *La Fille Mal Gardée* in St. Petersburg, in a version presumably produced by Jules Perot, and using the Hérold score.



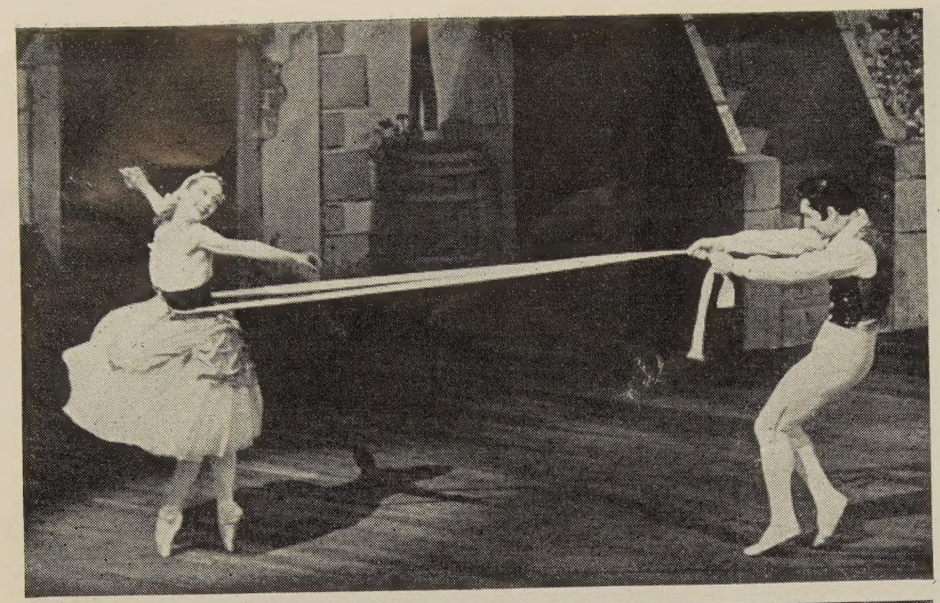
BEFORE THE BARNYARD CROWING: The Cockerel (Lawrence Ruffell) attended by four hens in the ballet's opening moments. Nadia Nerina, as Lise, is seen up the ladder on the right. *Photo: Houston Rogers.*

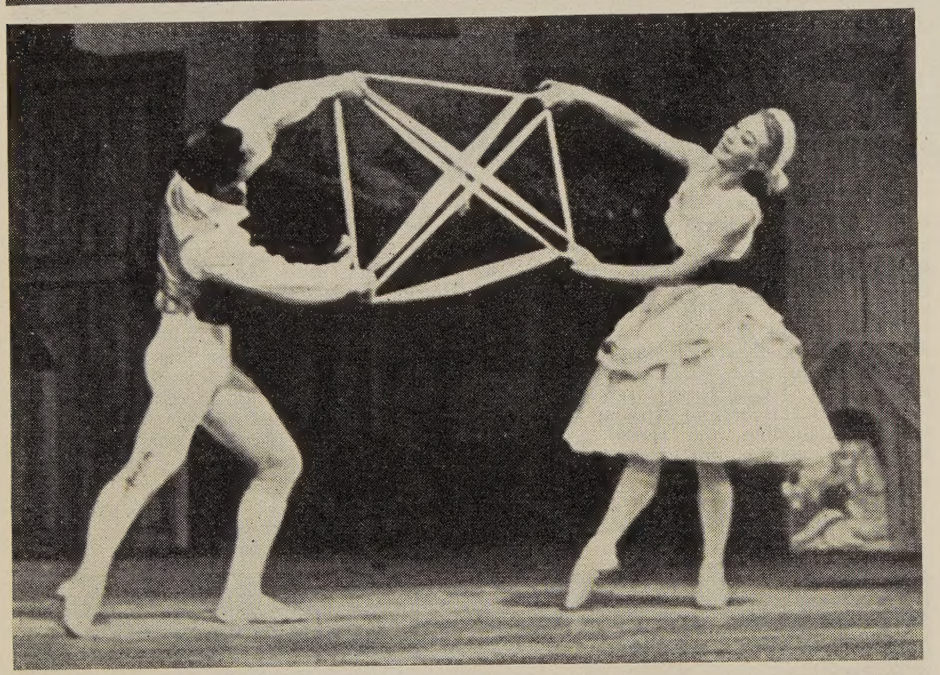
When Paul Taglioni came to produce the ballet in 1864 in Berlin, it was given yet another new score by the German composer Peter Ludvig Hertel, although this in part at least appears to have been based upon the Hérold. It was this score that Lev Ivanov used for his revival in 1885 at the Maryinsky, St. Petersburg, when Lise was danced by Virginia Zucchi, partnered by Pavel Gerdt. As all further versions of the ballet, until the present, sprang from this Ivanov production, the Hertel score had established itself as the standard.

The ballet has held its place in the Soviet repertory, where it is generally known as *Vain Precautions.* One of the best-known productions was that by Asaf Messerer during the war years at the Bolshoi Filial in an abbreviated version, with Lepeschinskaya as Lise. (As a matter of interest, Violetta Elvin danced in this production as a soloist in the *divertissement.*)

The ballet does not appear to have been seen in London between 1815, when Auguste Vestris appeared as Colas, and 1912 when Anna Pavlova presented a condensed ver-

MALE ENTRY: Harvesters arrive preparatory to going into the fields. Widow Simone (Stanley Holden) and her daughter Lise (Nerina) are seen on the left. *Photo: Houston Rogers.*





A BINDING DANCE: Lise (Nerina) and Colas (David Blair) dance with a ribbon which Lise has tied to his staff as a token of her devotion. Moments from their first pas de deux *in the opening scene.* *Photos: Houston Rogers.*

sion at the Palace Theatre with herself and Novikoff as the lovers. Another production in London was the one-act version given by Lydia Kyasht at the London Coliseum on October 2, 1917.

America first saw the ballet on July 6, 1839, when Mme. Lecomte danced the part in New York. Elssler also included the ballet in her American repertory, giving it for the last time on July 1, 1842. It was then not seen in America until Mikhail Mordkin produced it in New York on November 12, 1938, with Lucia Chase, Dimitri Romanoff and Mordkin himself as Simone. This production was later revised by Bronislava Nijinska for Ballet Theatre, and produced on January 19, 1940 with Patricia Beaumont and Yuri Shabelevsky. In 1947 Alexandra Balachova revived the ballet for the Marquis de Cuevas's company.

Since the death of Pavlova, two of these versions have been seen in London. The Cuevas production was first given at Covent Garden on August 26, 1948, with Ethéry Pagava and Vladimir Ouhtomsky. (The programme, however, gave the name of George Skibine.) The music of this De Cuevas version was described as being by Hérold, but, if memory is true, it was almost certainly by Hertel. Some dances of this Balachova production had in fact been seen earlier at a dance recital in London on January 5 of that same year — the dancers then were Renée Jeanmaire and Vladimir Skouratoff. The Ballet Theatre presentation was first seen in London on the afternoon of August 1, 1953. The choreography was described as "after Nijinska by Dimitri Romanoff" and the cast included Alicia Alonso and John Kriza. The rôle of Lise has also been danced in London by Anna Cheselka (De Cuevas) and Ruth Ann Koesun (Ballet Theatre).

CHOREOGRAPHY

IT was one of the happiest thoughts Frederick Ashton has ever had when he decided to revive Dauberval's old ballet *La Fille Mal Gardée.* He has made from it a splendid and entertaining work of art, the kind of ballet that people will want to go to time and time again, a ballet which if we are sensible we will treasure for ever in our repertory. Ashton has produced a living classic. It is also one peculiarly appropriate to us at the present time.

In Tamara Karsavina's charming commendatory note printed in the programme, which I suspect was intended by the Opera House to disarm nasty old critics from saying that rude word "old-fashioned," the great Russian ballerina not only rightly links Dauberval's ballet with the name of his great teacher Jean Georges Noverre, but also makes some excellent points about the whole work. As I have long given up any hope of ever being able to write English as cogently as Mme. Karsavina, let me borrow her words. "This production we now regard as the turning point in the history of ballet; a break-away from the formal, pseudo-classical tradition; a ballet of action instead of a succession of coventional dances which use the plot as a peg on which to hang a succession of 'éntrées, pas seuls, pas d'ensemble' . . . the story of *La Fille Mal Gardée* lends itself admirably to ballet treatment; there is not a dance in it that does not flow directly out of a natural situation. It is a charming period piece singularly compatible with the artistic trends of today — artistic reaction to contemporary life."

Noverre, of course, said something of the same thing right at the beginning of his great treatise on ballet, published just 200 years ago, *Letters on Dancing and Ballets:* "Poetry, painting and dancing, Sir, are, or should be, no other than a faithful likeness of beautiful nature." Although none of Noverre's ballets has survived, this man, friend of Voltaire and called by Garrick the "Shakespeare of the Dance," said everything that there was to be said, or is to be said, about the art of choreography, and indirectly, either through his pupils or through his writings, exercised a commanding influence on all of ballet. Nearly everything that we find really worthwhile in the 19th-century Romantic ballet can be traced back to his precepts. And as soon as his example was forgotten, there came the period of ballet's decadence, when it needed Fokine to restate, in almost telegraphic form, the essence of his message.

What is too often thought of as fundamental in a classic ballet (in ballet the terms "Classic" and "Romantic" are virtually synonomous, and the depressing thing is that it doesn't seem to confuse anyone) is merely the poetic paraphernalia placed on ballet by Romantic literature. But the real strength of these works is not to be found in their moonshine atmosphere and fairy trappings (although their fairy symbolism, in some instances, is another, far deeper thing) but in their quality of "faithful likeness of beautiful nature" or, if you prefer Mme. Karsavina's version, "artistic reaction to contemporary life." In returning to *La Fille Mal Gardée,* Ashton has by-passed the fairy glades, and gone back to basic principles.

I wonder if just possibly anything of Dauberval still exists in Ashton's new production. Who can tell? Nevertheless, I would be prepared to make a sporting bet that there is as much Dauberval in this, as there is Saint-Léon in the Royal Ballet's production of *Coppélia.* Ashton was given

the advice of Karsavina in the preparation of his new ballet, and consequently his production has certain links with that by Ivanov which can trace its pedigree through Perrot and Didelot straight back to Dauberval.

How close the links with Ivanov are can be seen by comparing the new Ashton with the Ballet Theatre production, based largely on Mordkin and presumably going back to the same source. The mime sequence where Lise looks forward to her marriage with Colas is extremely similar in both the Ashton and the Ballet Theatre productions, and even smaller points of detail — such as when Lise, trying to hide Colas from the wrath of her returning mother, looks into a tiny drawer to see if it offers any possibility of refuge — are common to both. Then there is all the traditional business that Ashton, faithfully following Dauberval's scenario, has incorporated. The *pas de ruban* culminating in the hobby-horse dance — this cannot be any more than a variation on Dauberval's original theme, and when a gust of wind sends Alain soaring up heavenwards clutching his red umbrella, he is only soaring in the same direction that Alains have been travelling for at least a century. Even those clog dances, which some people appear to think were an anachronistic innovation on Ashton's part, were probably not so different from the *Sabotière* duet in which Danilova danced in the ballet when she was a child at the Maryinsky.

However, despite Ashton's loving care to preserve as much of the authenticity of this marvellous museum piece as is humanly possible, I imagine that if Dauberval could only see his ballet now, he would be staggered at the choreography and, I hope, pleased. For whereas Ashton has done his best by tradition, he has also permitted himself complete licence to create his dances in an almost entirely contemporary idiom. While he frequently gives an affectionate nod of recognition to choreography such as Bournonville's — especially in some of the *ballabiles* — this merely gives a period flavour to a style that is far removed from pastiche.

Probably the real secret of Ashton's astonishing choreographic fertility is the way in which he can absorb different influences and make them completely part *of* himself and use them in a manner individual *to* himself. Not only can the discerning see traces of the Danish school and the Bolshoi in Ashton's latest style, but also many of the national dance troupes that have visited this country appear to have left their imprint on his dances.

Another continual source of inspiration to Ashton comes from the dancers he works with. Think of a ballet like *Birthday Offering*. Here were seven variations, each solo in some undefined way instantly recognisable as Ashton, while at the same time each dance equally *belonged* to the dancer for whom it was created. Each individual dance represented the interplay between the personality of the dancer and the common denominator of Ashton's basic dance style. It was therefore only to be expected that in this ballet where he was working for the first time in any extended form with Nadia Nerina and David Blair that the resulting choreography would reveal a new aspect of Ashton, to say nothing of a new aspect of his two dancers.

Fonteyn and Somes, his most frequent collaborators, have evoked an almost purely lyrical response from Ashton. This style of choreography Ashton seems to have brought to its final perfection in *Ondine*. Now Nerina and Blair appear to have offered the challenge for him to produce bravura choreography, and he has met it with startling success. Great huge jumps spanning the stage, dazzling spins, lace-like intricacies of footwork, Ashton, particularly in the Donizetti *pas de deux* of the picnic scene, has produced what amounts to a veritable manifesto of virtuosity.

Despite all this elating, heart-thumping incandescence, Ashton never loses sight of his pastoral subject, and maintains throughout the quaintly charming rustic atmosphere that is an integral part of the ballet. The characters are not Arcadian idealisations of shepherds and shepherdesses, and then again they are not quite real people. Their portraiture may be far removed from Watteau or Lancret, and they are also a good distance away from the *genre* painters. Karsavina sums it up when, talking of Virginia Zucchi's performance, she uses the phrase "realism within convention". That is just it; it is the realism of 19th-century opera rather than drama.

The ballet is riotously amusing, and Ashton's sense of fun has never been shown to better advantage. The comedy is beautifully produced and timed, both in mime and dance, and it was a brave and terrible thing to do, starting off a ballet with a dance routine for four farmyard hens and a cock. Surprisingly enough it works and the ridiculous dance gets enough laughs to send the whole work off on a wave of good humour. The ham-handed dexterity of the dances allotted to Grant as Alain are wonderful pieces of comic invention, a sort of choreographic visualisation of the stuttering of Vasek in *The Bartered Bride*, and every bit as funny. Equally engaging is the clog dance for Widow Simone. In smaller points of comic detailing Ashton is equally adept. The lovely moment when Simone, about to throw a potted plant at Colas, is attacked by economic remorse and just throws the plant, frugally leaving the pot to fight another day; the surprising somersaulted end to Alain's courting dance; the appealing mime scene where Lise pretends a fly is buzzing round her mother's head; the list could be extended and extended, but it cannot be closed without mention of Alain's final ga-ga exit, clutching his precious umbrella to his bosom and with his hat pulled down firmly over his eyes.

Where I feel that Ashton could perhaps have done better is in imparting more individuality to the villagers. One imagines what the Danes would have done with this kind of thing, and our *corps de ballet* becomes just a little reminiscent of chorus boys and chorus girls. Yet in fairness this is not altogether the choreographer's fault, and this chorus atmosphere is likely to remain with British ballet just as long as designers are allowed to dress them all alike, and their ages appear to range unconvincingly between the young and the very young.

DANCING

DURING one of her more improbable jumps at the first performance, Nadia Nerina suddenly flashed a tomboyish grin at the audience, and I felt I was seeing pure dancing. Without that grin it might have been more like athletics, but every *tour de force* was tossed off with such a spirit and sense of enjoyment that one was able to forget the difficulties and marvel at the grace. Well, never quite forget, because one of Nerina's most potent assets is her sheer

OFF TO THE FIELDS: Alain (Alexander Grant) is accompanied by village girls on their way to the harvest picnic. Part of a front-cloth between scenes one and two in the first act. *Photo: Houston Rogers.*

technical accomplishment, and one of the joys of watching her is in the feeling that you've never seen anyone go quite so fast or quite so high before.

It was clear from *Birthday Offering* that Ashton and Nerina made a formidable partnership, and all the promise held out by her variation in that ballet is amply fulfilled in this extended essay. While Ashton has provided choreography tailor-made to show up each and every one of her virtues, also the actual rôle of Lise is admirably suited to her naturally sunny personality. Her acting was warmly spontaneous, although I would make the reservation that it did not carry as well as it might have done — the nearer you are the better it looks, and from the stalls it looks very good indeed. She has a great deal of naturalistic mime to do, and she invested this with just the same sort of easy flow that characterises her dancing. Her two big mime scenes in the second act were made eloquent and natural, while the dappy fatuity she brings to her dance when she is trying to dupe Simone, proved a highlight of the ballet. There is no doubt that the rôle of Lise and the name of Nerina will always be associated in the records of British ballet.

It always used to be said that while Ashton was excellent at devising dances for women, he was never so effective in choreographing for men. I can't imagine that many people will be saying that in the future, for here he has given David Blair one of those chance-of-a-lifetime chances which Blair has seized magnificently. Here for the first time in over a century is a full-length male rôle every bit as prominent as the ballerina's, and it has been packed with dancing.

Blair is very much the male counterpart of Nerina, and their dancing complements each other most handsomely. Blair has never danced better, his perfection of detail and timing, the Harlequin quicksilver quality that he combines with an impression of power held in reserve, and his youthful bounding quality were exhilarating to watch.

His partnering proved completely assured, and when at the end of the most demanding *pas de deux* ever given to British dancers, he held Nerina up at arm's length above his head with one hand, in an attitude of triumph, there was a rare note of poetry in its sheer accomplishment.

Stanley Holden is one of the most gifted comedians British Ballet has ever produced, and the *travestie* rôle of Simone proved, as might have been expected, ideal for him. He played it in a robust masculine way, never once allowing the humour to "drag" in any way. It was a performance more or less straight out of the English music-hall, yet subtly under-played. He spurned any temptation such a rôle offers for farce and scene-stealing, and conceived his portrayal within the framework of the whole ballet. Holden's mime was unusually intelligent and inventive, and his solo Clog Dance turned out to be as good a bit of character dancing as we have seen for a long time.

The inspired idiocy of Alexander Grant, sublimely, radiantly stupid, was another joy of the evening. Whether he was dancing with a perkily pathetic bounce, spurring his hobby-horse on to even fresher efforts, or merely falling down a flight of stairs, Grant was almost touchingly funny. And when, after the discovery of the lovers, he is left rejected, his numbed, uncomprehending face made his whole characterisation hover on the brink of tears.

Leslie Edwards made a cheerful, roistering figure of Alain's father, producing a convincing air of bluster, and Lawrence Ruffell preened around his hens with the fussy air of a drill sergeant. The rest of the company danced well and even the real, live pony was pretty good — as ponies go.

Clive Barnes.

LOVERS DANCE: Colas (Blair) and Lise (Nerina) in the pas de deux *at the picnic. Photo: Houston Rogers.*

MUSIC

A WRY smile was provoked by the sight of Hérold's name so prominently emblazoned on Osbert Lancaster's drop-curtain. Such artistic licence begged more than a few questions, for all the best melodies in the score attributed to Hérold came from other composers like Rossini and Donizetti in the first instance, and even these have been "freely adapted and arranged" in John Lanchbery's effective new orchestration. The result is rather a fustian patchwork — cleaned and trimmed and renovated to make it serviceable, even brightly gleaming now and then, but all too threadbare in the warp and weft of its musical imagination to match the appeal of Ashton's choreographic invention.

Ferdinand Hérold, who died in 1833 at the age of 41, was a prolific composer of *opéras-comiques* (of which the Overture to *Zampa* is still sometimes to be heard in light orchestral programmes), and is credited with six ballets produced at the Paris Opéra. *La Fille Mal Gardée* was the fourth of these, written in 1828 while Hérold was chorus-master there. He retained a few passages from the Bordeaux score of 1789, which for the most part was a clumsy effort by an unknown composer, "borrowed" a capful of tunes elsewhere (he had no copyright law to worry about), added items of his own and stitched the pieces together.

Among the "borrowed" numbers are themes from the Overture to Rossini's *The Barber of Seville,* heard at the beginning of the ballet, and the storm music from the same composer's *La Cenerentola* for the harvest-field storm which ends the ballet's second scene. There are traces of Mozart in the first act and of Handel in the last (in Lise's *enchaînement* after meeting Colas at the door, for example), while the magnificent central *pas de deux* in the harvest scene is danced to an excerpt from Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'Amore* (1832), added to the ballet score in 1837 for Fanny Elssler. Lanchbery has now made some further insertions from the original Bordeaux score, as well as re-orchestrating the whole.

An instance of Lanchbery's skill in giving some fresh character to the music is the *pas seul* for Alain in the first scene, where the unfortunate simpleton's efforts to impress Lise are grotesquely pointed by tuba and piccolo at the extreme limits of the orchestral range. Rather more and bolder treatment of this sort would have been a help throughout, for there are still far too many passages where the music twinkles away unconcernedly and to no intrinsic purpose except by way of providing a rhythmic basis for the dancing. The full midday "Westminster" chimes on tubular bells in the harvest scene strike an incongruous note (twenty, in fact), superimposed as they are on music of such blameless classical insipidity. All too much of the score suffers

from this, fading into mere background decoration instead of enhancing the choreography.

Other versions of the ballet, including the Petipa-Ivanov production of 1885 at St. Petersburg and the later versions in the repertoire of Ballet Theatre and De Cuevas, use a score by Hertel. It has perhaps slightly more strength of character than Hérold's but less of the period tea-cosy charm. Here again, the music has been freely patched-up by Delibes, Minkus, Drigo and Rubinstein among others, so that the opportunity was wide open for a new commission (from, say Poulenc ?) which might have done justice to the subject. With its customary indifference to things musical, however, the management failed to take the chance, and a lop-sided creation is the result.

In the circumstances, the weight of choreographic interest needs to be sustained by orchestral playing that is not merely competent but glistens with the utmost poise, precision and sparkle. Such qualities were forthcoming in nothing like enough measure at the first performance under Hugo Rignold, which sounded spiritless and duller than it need have done.

Noël Goodwin.

DECOR

THERE are few groans more boring than the person who declares how lovely something would have been if only so-and-so were still alive — really tedious it is. I'm afraid I relegated myself to this abortive-thinking group during the course of *La Fille Mal Gardée* by moaning inwardly, at moments almost outwardly, that André Derain had been removed to another and more celestial sphere. Ashton has created such an enchanting pastoral romp around the oldest ballet in the European repertory that it needed a parallel in its designing.

How beautifully, to continue my wearisome train of though, Derain would have evoked the spirit of it all with his innate and deceptively naïve sense of fitness and his wonderful colour sense. But alas Derain is no longer with us and the only other designer with a similar approach, Jean Hugo, no longer works for the theatre, so the choice fell on Osbert Lancaster. While his designing for two Cranko ballets — *Pineapple Poll* and *Bonne-Bouche* — together with his *Daily Express* cartoons and books on architecture have all been wholly admirable, and in this respect I am one of his greatest admirers, I just don't think that a gentle romantic pastorale was really in the county of Lancaster.

There are no two things about it — ballets of Romanticism which include such works as *La Sylphide, Giselle* and *La Fille Mal Gardée* need a very special approach. For one thing they lose all point if the spirit of the period and of the music is not retained. The music is rounded, therefore the designing should avoid all harshness, hard lines and and angles. Also all ballets of this period are narrative ballets and to believe in the story it is also important that the environment should be credible ; both comedy and tragedy lose all impact if it is impossible to relate either to everyday happenings.

Osbert Lancaster has mixed his idioms. For instance, in the first act he has achieved a perfectly plausible French farmyard and he used a number of practical objects such as chairs that can be sat upon, tables that could be eaten off, ladders that can be climbed and so on ; then he goes and spoils it all by painting a wheelbarrow on one flat, a dog in a kennel on another and doves in a dovcote somewhere else. It all becomes a very tongue-in-cheek affair because Lancaster is not a good enough painter to give this sort of naïvety integrity, which is what Derain would have done, nor is he a deeply sincere stage designer like, say, Lila de Nobili, who can make any Romantic impossibilities seem plausible. The hard black outlines which surround everything give the impression of a child's painting book with the colours filled in by a competent but uninspired sub-teenager.

That his architecture is right and proper goes without question but when it comes to nature — trees, landscapes and all that — then the result is distressing. This fault is not so noticeable in the opening scene where architecture holds as much sway as in his opening scene for *Coppélia,* whose shape seems to be identical to the present work, but in the second scene — oh, la! la! Now I know, from personal experience, that trees are not easy on the stage but I cannot imagine anyone, with any years of experience as an artist, cooking-up a rural

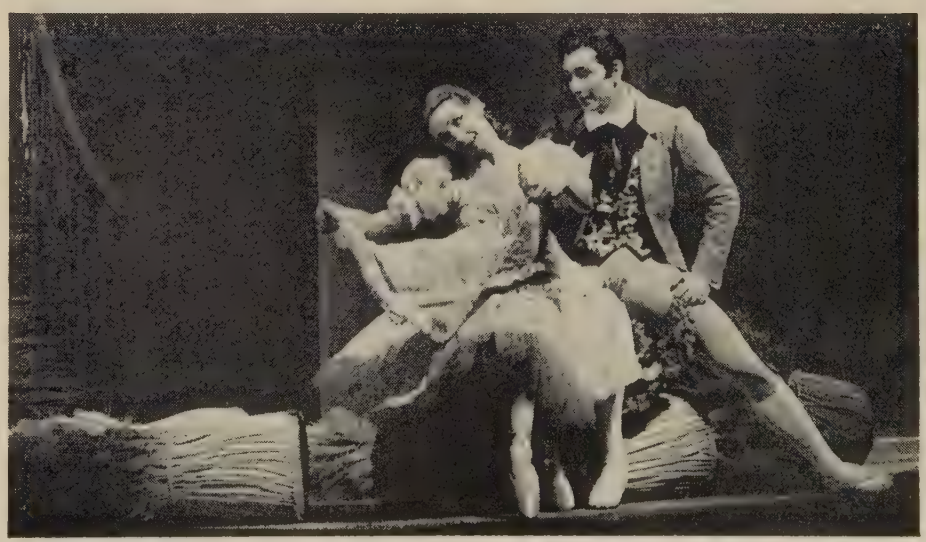
PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS : Left, Stanley Holden, as Widow Simone, in Dominic's picture. Right, Alain (Alexander Grant) with his father Thomas (Leslie Edwards) in Houston Rogers' picture.

panorama quite as uninspired as what meets our astonished gaze. One cut-cloth up-stage nearest to the back-cloth, will remain for me as being the prime example of how *never* to design tree scenery. It is very sad because this cornfield scene, framed in such arboreal monstrosities, has some glorious dancing and exquisitely-evocative choreography. The two scenes had been separated by a drop-cloth showing vineyard owner Thomas's little chateau smugly placed in a long avenue of trees and obviously "commanding extensive views of the surrounding countryside", and this was treated in the same crude manner. Another front-cloth, used before each act, contained all the elements for the abuse of such things, and about which I wrote about at length last month when praising Alix Stone's designs for *Sweeny Todd*. Its heavy-handed humour, with a saucy statue blatantly exposing her twin charms like those photographs you can see around the nightspots of Soho, with the ballet's title inscribed upon the inevitable swags of red drapery, with its gargantuan picnic accessories spread before fields of cartoon cows — none of this gives a clue to the mood and gentle charm of the ballet to follow.

But even when it comes to architecture, Lancaster does not have it all his own way because his interior of the farm, in the last act, is not very satisfactory. It is not easy but it is possible to achieve farmhouse interiors on large stages — large enough for *ensembles* and intimate enough for mime scenes between two or three people. In certain ballets such as *La Sylphide* and in a number of works in the Royal Danish Ballet's repertory we have seen how possible it is, by the use of beams, rafters and

AND YET MORE RIBBONS: Top left, two more scenes from the beautiful ribbon pas de deux *for Nerina, Blair and* corps de ballet *in act one, scene two. Below, the* corps de ballet *in the Maypole dance which comes at the end of act one. Photos: Houston Rogers.*

LAST ACT: Above, the villagers bring in the harvest and perform a stick dance. Right, Lise dances for her mother while she spins. Below, Lise and Colas are reunited as, in spite of Widow Simone's precautions, he has smuggled himself into the farmhouse in the bales of straw.
Photos: Houston Rogers.



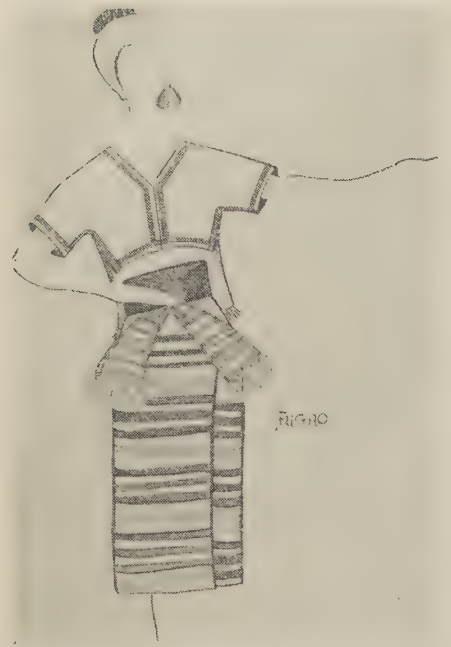
the intelligent use of false perspective — to create settings in which all this is possible and believable. The trouble with Lancaster's interior is that it is far too high and this dimension is carried to absurdity by washing and vegetables hanging high, so high up in the rafters that only a giant's step-ladder could ever reach them. A slight attempt has been made to shade the upper extremities of this high room so as to lessen its height but the attempt is half-hearted. The pictures of comic cattle and a few pieces of farmhouse furniture never really clothe this room to any degree. Apart from anything else the sightlines are bad and from certain parts of the auditorium it is impossible to see some of the action — the same could be said of both this and the opening set.

More satisfactory are some of the costumes which are mainly good in silhouette apart from those for Widow Simone which are far too short for a lady of some years and dignity. But it is their colours that give them such a lack of distinction. It is perhaps significant that by far the most satisfactory costume is Lise's bridal dress in the last act — it's white. This was a charming creation and so were some of those for David Blair as Colas, who looked for all the world like one of those prints of Vestris. Otherwise the colours — in waistcoats for the boys and peasant skirts for the girls created more confusion than anything else. Possibly the best costumes of all were not for human characters but for a rooster and four hens. These delicious creatures, whose peckings and scratchings start the ballet off on a hilarious note, are extremely lifelike and are real comic creations. *(Continued on page 33)*

The Air was Touched

The Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company opened a four-week season at the Palace Theatre, London, on January 11, and proved to be one of the most exhilarating imports that London has seen for many years. Amongst the many delights of this presentation were the wonderful costumes, which have been sketched for Dance and Dancers by members of the company.

by PETER WILLIAMS



PAGAN LORE: Above, a drawing by Lilia Reyes, who is the first singer in the company, of an Ifugao festival costume.

"THE Peach is ripe — The Lime is Green — The air is touched with Tangerine," so sang Lena Horne in a musical, *Jamaica,* when referring to some islands many thousand miles and another ocean away from the Philippines. But on a freezing and dismal January night when the Bayanihan Philippine company opened at the Palace Theatre, the performance had not been going for half an hour when these lyrics came smooching into my head — and stayed there. The horrors of a London January evaporated and the air became spice-laden and we could almost feel the sun and hear the gentle lap of the waves of those far-off Pacific islands.

The Philippine Islands, I must confess, were little more than a name to me. Of course we heard a great deal about them in the war but then there was hardly a place in the globe which we didn't hear about; we heard tales of the charm of its people and of its beauty but otherwise they seemed to be just another group of islands that the chances of visiting seemed as remote as the islands themselves. Certainly the fact that they might produce any sort of dance that we might want to see never passed through my mind. Nor possibly did it pass through their minds until about five years ago when Mrs. Francisca Aquino gathered together her research at the request of the State University in Manila. For many years previously the Folk Arts Centre had been working on the preservation of folk dances but it was Helena Benitez, President of the Bayanihan Folk Arts Centre and Vice-President of the Philippine Women's University, who was mainly responsible for organising all this folklore into a form of theatrical presentation. In actual fact it is a bit hard to discover exactly who did what because the word "Bayanihan" means "working together", and this is just what they all do — in the true meaning of the word. Neither the present dance director and choreographer, Lucrecia Reyes Urtula, nor the costume director, Isabel Santos, will ever take full credit for their remarkable work because they say that everyone has contributed something in one way and another. All I can say is that if this is an example of working together, then it is high time some occidental companies paid a visit to the Philippines to learn about Bayanihan.

KALINGA WEDDING (left): The bridegroom and bride exchange gifts in the Kalinga Wedding Dance from the opening section of the programme.

COSTUME DETAIL (left): A drawing by Antonio Fabella of the dress worn by the bride for the Kalinga Wedding Dance.

Like that island in Barrie's *Mary Rose,* the Philippines like to be visited, and for many centuries people have done just that. Some have stayed longer than others — the Muslims came in the 14th-century and even today their influence is very strong; the Spaniards came around 1565 and stayed

until 1898. Both groups of visitors left a decided influence upon the dance.

Pagan Dances

BUT the first group of dances that Bayanihan showed was completely unaffected by foreign invaders because it showed a number of primitive tribal dances from the mountain regions of northern Luzon — and these have been going on for over 2,000 years. The dances are given to celebrate the various and usual occasions in tribal life — war, death, marriage, invocation of elements, thanksgiving for a plentiful harvest and so on. They are danced to nose flutes, bamboo guitars and numerous gongs as well as to singing.

The suite was excellently arranged. Starting off with a *Bontoc War Dance,* it passed on to a Funeral dance invoking the deities to revenge a warrior slain in battle. A line of crouching males enter beating out the rhythm on wooden sticks suitably called "bangibang". Each stick has a basic note and the effect is rather weird. Passing from these rather sombre themes, we come to scenes of courtship with the prospective bride and groom exchanging gifts — in this case a sword for protection and a marriage blanket. The groom then dances around his bride in swooping movements suggestive of a large bird. Finally the company celebrate a fruitful marriage in the *Ifugao* Festival Dance.

The main emphasis in all these dances, as in most primitive dances, is on the intricate foot movements and the strong rhythms. The upper part of the body is mainly erect and most expression in the arms comes through the elbows as in many movements the arms are bent, though at times the arm is held straight with the hands flapping the rhythm. It is interesting to see how, possibly unconsciously, many of the movements and positions of the body have been used in the works of people like Martha Graham. The costumes were principally in stripes of warm red and brown and the whole effect, the scenery consisted of two hornéd totems and black curtains, bore a certain similarity to primitive bark paintings of the Australian aborigines.

Influence of Spain

THE Spanish influence on Philippine dance became very apparent in the suite which followed — *Fiesta Filipina.* With the coming of the Spaniards in the 16th-century also came dances that were popular through the courts of Europe. Over the centuries these dances, which included the waltz, polka and mazurka in addition to Spanish regional dances, became impregnated with the spirit and gaiety of this island people until they became indigenous to their new surroundings. This series of social dances suddenly opened up a quite different mood to the opening scene and the first sight of the girls in their long full-skirted white dresses (designed by Luis Ma. Araneta) with heavily embroidered sashes and shawls of brilliant colours immediately provoked applause. This *Polkabal* (mixture of polka and waltz) had the girls stepping, turning and bending, sometimes alone and sometimes in pairs ; all of which they did with immense natural charm. As the first group left, five couples walked gravely on for the *Mazurka Botolena* — the girls in Edwardian dresses of yellow and black, the boys in embroidered white shirts worn outside their black trousers. Their dance was stately and dignified.

This was followed by a wedding dance, *Habanera Botolena,* in which the bride, after having danced with her father and expressed her happiness to her guests, is then joined by the groom. Apart from its infectious liveliness and the really splendid costumes, the main interest in this dance was the beautiful dipping turns of the bride which caused her full skirt to swing out over the stage. The suite ended with *Jota Moncadena,* in which the Spanish castanet was replaced by bamboo clappers. At moments the lively rhythm slowed down and the pairs bow to each other while still holding both hands. It lacked the intricacies of the Spanish *Jota* but it was extremely lively and showed more clearly than anything just how strong the Spanish influence was during its 300 years duration.

Mohammedan Influence

THE first part of the programme ended with *Muslim Suite.* After having been in the Philippines since the 14th-century, the main stronghold of the Muslims is in Mindanao, one of the southernmost islands in the Philippine group. They are a very proud people and of royal blood, and are reluctant for their dances to be given as a theatrical spectacle. Mrs. Urtula had great

POLKABAL : One of the dances, given by ten girls, from Fiesta Filipina. *This form of Polka was brought to the Philippines by the Spaniards, and a decided Spanish influence can be seen in their dresses. Details of the costumes can be seen in the drawing above by Lilia Reyes. Photograph below by Roy Round.*

MUSLIM SUITE: *Dances showing the strong Muslim influence which has existed in the Philippines since the 14th century have been collected into a suite. The Sultana (Sheila Ascalon) is seen dancing for the ladies of the Court, details of whose costumes will be found in the drawing on page 18.* *Photo: Roy Round.*

difficulty in persuading them to show their dances and even when she had finally convinced them of the importance of their dances being preserved for posterity, they would only show them to her privately and behind closed doors.

The suite is arranged with a slight theme opening with the entrance of a Sultan and his Sultana. The entrance alone is very splendid with the gorgeous crimson robes of the two principals — he with a three-tiered umbrella held over him. The dances for the Sultana and the ladies of the court have a certain resemblance to frescoes in the Ajunta caves of India. The body moves in a sliding undulating way and the arms caress, the head, the body and hips with the palms of the hands bent back in a perfect curve. The costumes are magnificent, some in pink and magenta others in turquoise, yellow and orange and each with a wide stiff sash draped across the body. When the court is assembled, a series of dances follow which provide a sort of cabaret for the Sultan. First comes *Tahing Baila,* a dance to invoke fish before an expedition. The movements are very expressive and, just as in Kathakali, the hands and the whole body are used to suggest the flapping fins and the aqueous progression of fish. This is followed by *Sagayan,* a dance in which warriors are mesmerised and worked into a frenzy before going into battle. They get worked up to such a pitch that they start to fight with an invisible enemy.

SPANISH INFLUENCE: Two drawings from Fiesta Filipina *by Jose Ma. Hubilla. Left is the girls' black and yellow costume for* Mazurka Boholana. *Right, the two dancers are dancing the* Jota Moncadena *and using a primitive form of castanet. These European dances were originally brought to the Philippines by the Spaniards and then adapted to the local idiom.*

In the final number a procession appears, led by a palanquin and a number of followers bearing long bamboos which are laid on the stage on rests and forming three sides of a square. With girls beating these pairs of bamboos together a strange soft sound and a definite rhythm starts. A beautiful Princess emerges from the palanquin, veiled and with an umbrella always held over her to denote her rank. She stamps on the ground three times to proclaim her imperious status and then starts to manipulate her fans so that they look like butterflies. Suddenly the stage is invaded by more court ladies also bearing fans which they twist and turn until it is as if a flight of doves had alighted. Finally, a Prince arrives and both he and the Princess adroitly dance in and out of the opening and shutting bamboos as the rhythm gets faster and faster.

This scene was taken from a fragment of the Philippine epic, *Daragan,* and tells of a Prince with a roving eye. His amatory successes have always been easy so the gods decide to make things a bit more difficult for his next proposed conquest. An earthquake and flood cause boulders and rocks to fall in the path towards his goal

FESTIVE OCCASIONS (above): Two costumes, drawn by Alfonso Guino-O. Left, a ladies' dress from Jota Moncadena. *Right is the Bride's dress, a beautiful creation in pink and grey, from* Habenera Botolena.

ENTRY OF THE PRINCESS (below): A moment from Muslim Suite, *when the Princess (Rosalinda Anido) enters and dances with two fans. Court ladies follow suit. Photo: Roy Round.*

— so that he has to climb over them before getting his Princess. His journey through the clapping bamboos represents the obstacles that the gods place in his way.

From many regions

THE second part of the programme opens with regional variations stemming from a variety of sources. Amongst them are two which might well be called "percussion" dances in that in both a hard object is beaten against another hard object to give the beat as with the castanet in Spanish dance. In the first of these, *Maglalatik,* ten boys wearing a harness of coconut shells on their backs, chests, hips and thighs, beat the shells with the two others held in their hands. They beat on their own shells, then as they dance round they also beat on the shells of their opponents. It is very fast and needs great skill because one miss can throw the whole rhythm out. In many ways it resembled the Austrian *Schulplattern* dance. It originated in the coconut region of Laguna and emerged from the fights which used to ensue when one party of coconut pickers had more residue than another. Over the years the fighting developed into a dance.

The other "percussion" dance was a stick dance—*Sakuting.* Folklore the world over has stick dances and this was brought to the Philippines by the Chinese traders who would dance at Christmas time in the hope of making some extra money; the sticks were possibly chopsticks originally and the music is decidedly Chinese in flavour.

Two other numbers concerned bird behaviour. The first of these, *Itik Itik,* given by a group of girls is a social dance from the northern part of Mindanao. It originated by a girl being asked to dance at a party but she had had too much to drink and, instead, started to imitate the waddling and wing-flapping of ducklings — hence the Tagolog title for the dance which means "duck". In their yellow, orange and black checked dresses, with a head-dress looking like a beak, the girls step and waddle in staccato movements through this amusing and engaging dance.

In order to find the second of these bird dances, *Binaylan,* Mrs. Urtula had great difficulty because it is only performed at the full moon by the Manobo tribe in the province of Agusan. Apart from the complication of hitting off the right night, the region is a remote one. As a result of the heavy rains her car broke down and it was only by the greatest stroke of luck that she was able to see the dances at all. The bird in question is a hawk and his dance, with spear poised, represents his descent upon a village until he is eventually chased away. Interwoven into this, for stage purposes, is another Manobo dance in which the girls weave as in a trance waving coloured cloths. Again, as in the programme's opening group, the main interest was in the footwork and in the pink, white and black horizontally striped costumes which made an interesting background for the coloured scarves.

Another dance of pagan origin came from the Bagobos tribe of Mindanao. Really a courtship dance, the accent here was on a remarkable instrument called the Tangungguan, a large triangular wooden frame from which are suspended a series of gongs.

The two last numbers in this section used the naked flame. The first, *Dugso,* is a ritual dance from the Bukidnon province of Mindanao. A girl enters bearing a bowl of

BAYANIHAN COSTUMES: Left is a drawing for a Court Lady (see page 16) in Muslim Suite *by Lilia Reyes. Next to her is another Court Lady from the same suite (see page 17) drawn by Alfonso Guino-O. The pair next to her are for the fish dancers,* Tahing Baila, *also from* Muslim Suite, *drawn by Rosa Puertollano.*

fire which she places in front of three dancers representing the sacred palm (Anahaw). She and her attendants then perform a ritual dance to no musical accompaniment except for the occasional shaking of the palm leaves and the tinkle of bells on their feet. As they dance, the smoke from the fire takes their prayers of thanksgiving for a good harvest up to the gods. The prayers duly dispatched, the dancers file out.

Festivals of lights play a great part in Asiatic folklore and in that of the Pacific islands; the final number in this section showed us the Philippine version. In long yellow dresses with a sort of checked blue asymmetrical apron, the girls glide round with little lighted oil lamps balanced on their heads and on the backs of their hands. Against a darkened night sky and with the only scenery being an immense star suspended on a high pole, these little lights move around like comets in a miniature milky way. The effect is gentle and charming and suggests soft, warm nights with the breeze rustling the palm leaves.

FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS: Dancers with lighted oil lamps on their heads and on the backs of their hands in Pandanggo Sa Ilaw. *Photo: Roy Round.*

From the country

THE final part of the programme was given over to typical scenes in rural Philippine life — work and pleasure — and the company seemed to enter into each phase with real zest and pleasure. In rural communities, as in the dance company, the emphasis is on working together, and the scene opens with neighbours moving a lady's house — apparently a typical sight in country districts. She is not certain just where she wants it placed but when she has made up her mind and everyone is happy they dance and sing in celebration. Unfortunately the celebrations are interrupted by a sudden storm and everyone runs for shelter, some trying to shelter under large leaves, others have straw capes and like frogs they jump over the pools which begin to form. As the storm clears two dancers sow rice. Then to the accompaniment of a guitar, the rice is transplanted and then harvested. After that comes the pounding by the boys in large wooden pestle and mortar-like objects. The girls then winnow the rice in large trays and the work completed, a fiesta starts. Three girls and two boys dance with wine glasses balanced on their heads and manage to keep the receptacles upright even while rolling on the ground; a girl provokes her lover to try and put his hat on by bending his head forward and fitting it into the crown; other dancers come on in wooden sandals and then take them off and use them as castanets. Finally some long bamboos are brought on, rather similar to those used in the previous *Muslim Suite,* and three pairs of dancers jump in and out of them as the pace gets quicker. This dance

BAYANIHAN COSTUMES : The drawing in the centre of the page is for a dancer in Binaylan *by Lilia Reyes. Next to her are two girls in* Itik Itik *(Duck Dance), drawn by Jose Ma Hubilla, who is also responsible for the girl balancing wine glasses in* Binasuan. *Extreme right is a drawing for* Rugso, *the fire dance without music, by Lilia Reyes.*

is called *Tinikling* after the long-legged birds which eat the rice at harvest time — the bamboos are a trap to catch them.

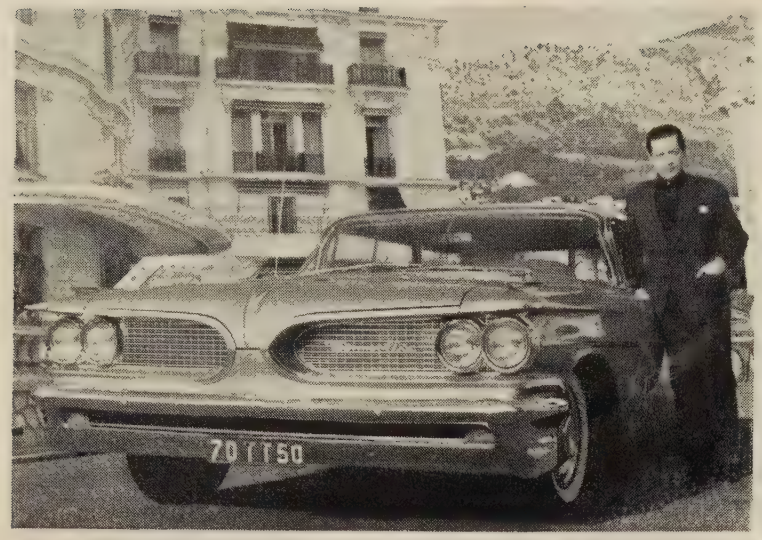
The whole scene is produced in a masterly way combining music, song and dance. There was remarkable continuity and the dances emerged naturally out of the situations — suddenly out of the crowd came groups that we had not been aware of previously: they danced and then evaporated back into the crowd as others came on. But then the entire production had been planned in a way that showed complete understanding of theatre — well arranged and balanced with nothing going on for too long, sensitive lighting and simple settings which showed off some of the most beautiful costumes that London has seen since the war.

Having seen no Philippine dancing before it is impossible to have any standards as to the quality of the dancing. But the fact that everything looked wonderful is praise enough, and they have set a standard by which we may judge any future presentations from these islands. One can only respect the meaning of their title, Bayanihan, and say that they all worked splendidly together. The fact that all the dancers are students, with a year's leave from the University, makes the sheer professionalism all the more remarkable because they projected a natural charm and enjoyment of life in everything they did. Moreover, they revealed a skill, in the dances which called for it, that puts many professional companies of long standing to shame. All through they showed great aristocracy and natural discipline and a sense of theatre that made the many scenes come alive and not be just another folklore number.

In addition to the people already mentioned praise is due to Lucrecia Kasilag, the musical director who with her group of musicians and singers provided an admirable and varied accompaniment to all the dances, and also to the stage director Jose Lardizabal. In its way the whole presentation was as theatrically professional as, say, the combination of Jerome Robbins and Jean Rosenthal. By balancing the programme so that there was contrast and with nothing going on for too long, they achieved something that even a non-dance public could enjoy and from which every professional theatre person should profit — I wonder how many of them did and have?

Few countries have sent out better dance ambassadors, because what Bayanihan showed was the life and charm of its native land. In the dance world, the Philippines have definitely placed themselves on the map and they have aroused in me an aching desire to pay them a visit — in fact I can hardly wait. But as any such journey in the near future seems highly unlikely, I can only hope that they will return to us soon with more of the 200 dances that make up their dance encyclopaedia — it will be the next best thing.

BINASUAN : Three girls balancing wine glasses in one of the many charming numbers from Rural Philippine Suite *which concludes the programme.*



LIFAR OFF AND ON STAGE: Left, Serge Lifar with his new car, which was a gift, outside the Hôtel de Paris in Monte Carlo. Right, he is seen in L'Aprés-midi d'un Faune, *which he danced at the gala in the Monte Carlo Theatre in homage to Diaghilev.*

Accent on Diaghilev

for Monte Carlo's Christmas season

The Strasbourg Opera Ballet and the Netherlands Ballet flanked some gala performances, one of which was given in honour of the 50 years since the Diaghilev Ballet started, made up the Winter ballet season at Monte Carlo.

by IRENE LIDOVA **Photographed by SERGE LIDO**

AT Christmas, the Théâtre de Monte-Carlo presented again, as in every year, a festival of dance. This latest programme was on the theme of the Ballets Russes, and the gala of December 29, which was attended by Prince Rainier, was intended to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the formation of the Diaghilev Company, which found its most favoured home at Monte-Carlo.

We arrived the night just before the gala and thus missed the opening programme danced by the Strasbourg Opera Ballet, under the direction of its gifted *maître de ballet,* Jean Combes. Three distinguished guest artists appeared with this company: Yvette Chauviré, Irène Skorik and Youly Algaroff.

We regret that we were unable to praise Chauviré in *Giselle* or Skorik in *Cendrillon,* although the latter's interpretation was generally considered excellent when she first danced the rôle at Strasbourg. Serge Lifar, in top form in the theatre, reigned everywhere — on the stage and in the studio, which is situated in the basement. The dancers complained among themselves that its floor was too hard, though Nijinsky's light foot graced its surface many times, as did Karsavina's *pointes.* It was in this famous studio that Eugène Grunberg and Lifar reunited the dancers, journalists and balletomanes to pay homage not only to Diaghilev, but to Monte Carlo itself which had always shown such hospitality to the company. After a short prayer delivered by Father Romensky; the critic, Charles Imbert, and Lifar, spoke their tributes to the Ballets Russes. Then a tiny dancer unveiled a portrait of Diaghilev which will remain henceforth in the studio. Everyone regretted that Margot Fonteyn was unable to be present at this moving ceremony.

The gala of December 29 started with the arrival of Prince Rainier and Princess Grace. Rubbing shoulders in the glittering theatre were the Begum Aga Khan, Ali Khan, the Marquis de Cuevas (who came as a neighbour from Cannes), and many distinguished personalities with shoulders swathed in chinchilla — in homage, as a wit said, to Diaghilev.

BRITISH VISITORS: Margot Fonteyn and Michael Somes in Ashton's Raymonda pas de deux, *which they gave at one of the Monte Carlo performances. For the Diaghilev gala, they danced the* Firebird pas de deux.

Les Sylphides opened the programme with the delightful Liane Daydé, the exquisite Irène Skorik, and the over-dynamic Tessa Beaumont. Michael Renault, more discreet and noble, was the cavalier. Renault, with Dayde, then danced the "Black Swan" *pas de deux,* but with a too aggressive virtuosity. Next came Chauviré, partnered by Youly Algaroff, suave and musical in excerpts from Act 2 of *Swan Lake.*

To complete the programme Kalioujny danced a rather feeble extract from *Petrouchka* and a passage from *Prince Igor,* which got across though it was of mediocre quality. But there was no doubt in anyone's mind that the triumph of the evening was a performance by Margot Fonteyn and Michael Somes in the *Firebird pas de deux* which came close to perfection. To pay homage to a great dancer of the past, Lifar was prevailed upon to dance *L'Après-midi d'un Faune,* and, in their applause, the audience paid to him their tribute for illustrating the fame of the Ballets Russes for so many years.

After the performance we found ourselves with Lifar and Countess Lillian Ahlefeld in the charming flat of the young Greek balletomane, Perri Emberikos, who had also invited the Begum Aga Khan, the Marquis de Cuevas the dancers we had just applauded.

To celebrate the New Year, even more ballets were staged. Margot Fonteyn, supple and diaphanous in the *Raymonda pas de deux,* and glittering in *Casse-Noisette* scored further hits with the public. Both of these, the former created by Frederick Ashton and the latter revived for them by Madame Karsavina according to the version she danced in St. Petersburg, were recently reviewed in *Dance and Dancers* when both were given at a R.A.D. Gala matinée in London.

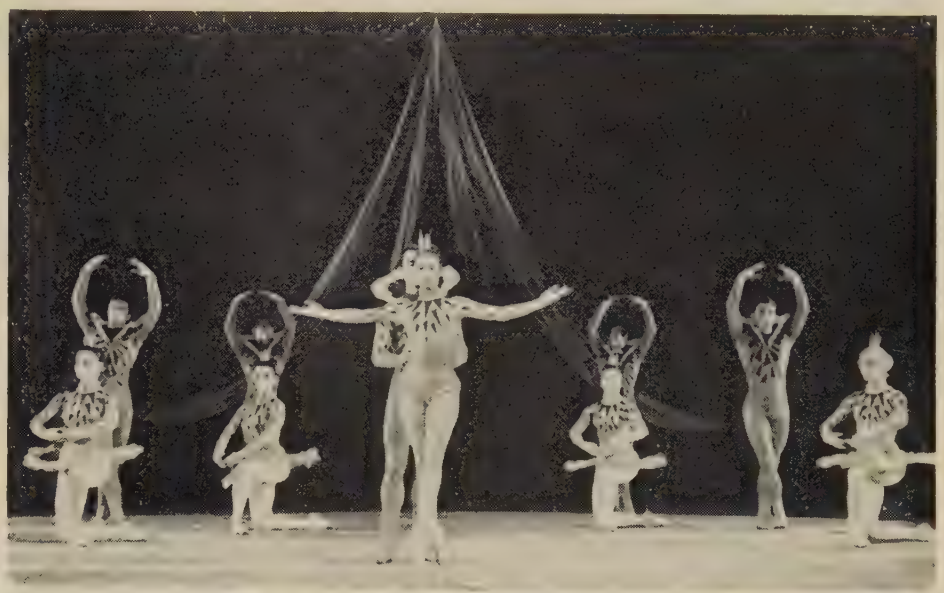
Supporting the dancers from Britain was the young company formed by Pierre Lacotte, which in addition to him included dancers such as Josette Clavier, Lena Skerla and Lucien Mars, all of whom gave notable performances. Unfortunately the

ballets — which included *Concertino* (to Vivaldi music), *Aiguillage* (to Jacques Lasry music) and *Tempo Universel* (to Albinioni music) — were rather too experimental and lacking in real invention. Although all experiment in the dance should be encouraged it is possibly not quite the place for such works to be presented in a programme with great international stars.

And to toast the arrival of the New Year, Eugene organised a party for the artists and friends at the Hotel Hermitage.

On New Year's Day, the Netherlands Ballet under Sonia Gaskell's direction, coming direct from the Hague to Monte-Carlo, joined the proceedings. With the exception of the Australian dancer, Joan Cadzow, none of the company's dancers were familiar to us. An American, Karel Shook, has assumed the post of *maître de ballet*, and it is probably thanks to him that this group's principal dancers are now American. Alas, we could only regret that they attempted works which we had already seen danced to perfection in Monte Carlo : Balanchine's *Night Shadow* and Lifar's *Suite en Blanc*. The dancers, however, seemed far more at ease and expressive in two works of modern inspiration : Béjart's *Le Cercle*, and, especially, in *Jazz Nocturne*, with choreography by Karel Shook to the music of Alex Philipse.

In the company we were thrilled to discover the coloured dancer, Billy Wilson, remarkable for his rhythm and flexibility, and the very young Sonja Van Beers, a red-haired beauty with fantastically long legs and the head carriage of a young queen. We were very pleased to be able to watch this young couple at the final rehearsal of *The Moor of Venice*, Lifar's latest ballet with a score by Maurice Thiriet. At rehearsal the work seemed so-so, but on the following evening it scored an astonishing success at its première, and, by their fire and youth, its two principal dancers won the hard-to-please hearts of the Monte Carlo audience.



CONCERTINO *(above) : Josette Clavier and Pierre Lacotte in his ballet to Vivaldi music which was one of the works his group presented on New Year's Eve in Monte Carlo. The designs are by Pierre Clayette. Lacotte, who was one of the most promising male dancers of the Paris Opéra, has been suffering for the past two years with foot trouble. Now he has completely recovered and is dancing and choreographing for his group.*

DANCERS FROM HOLLAND : Two studies of Sonja Van Beers and Billy Wilson, of the Nederlands Ballet, in Jazz Nocturne *(left) and* The Moor of Venice *(right). These two dancers scored one of the biggest hits of the Monte Carlo season.*

Romantic Ballerinas in Dublin

I. MARIE TAGLIONI

Introduced by IVOR GUEST

MARIE TAGLIONI : A portrait now in the Musée des Arts Decoratif in Paris.

ALTHOUGH communications were, by modern standards, decidedly primitive in the 1830's and 1840's, the great stars of the ballet — the Romantic Ballerinas, as we know them, for the male dancers were hardly considered in those days — travelled almost as widely as dancers do today. It was only in the 1840's that railways began to link distant places and enable people to travel with a speed and a comfort undreamed of not many years before, yet such was the demand for Taglioni, Elssler, Cerrito and Grisi that they braved journeys which would no doubt appear formidable to us in order to fulfil their engagements. The rule of the survival of the fittest certainly applies in the world of ballet, and it says much for the physical toughness of the great dancers of the past that they survived the rigorous demands of travel to live to a great age.

The triumphs of the great ballerinas of Romantic times in Paris, London, Milan and St. Petersburg have been many times recorded, but not so well known are their fleeting visits to lesser centres. No important creations distinguished these visits, but the performances were no less eagerly awaited than the gala occasions in the most splendid of opera houses. Something of this anticipation can be communicated to us today as we turn the fading pages of provincial newspapers, where space was often found for a long and valuable record of a great performance.

This series of articles will evoke a series of performances that cover a period of thirteen years in a single theatre — the Theatre Royal, Dublin. They owe their origin to the discovery, by the distinguished American photographer Walter E. Owen, of an autograph of Taglioni's, seemingly a page from an album with an embossed floral design surrounding a panel for the signature. In this panel the great dancer had written, in French, the words : "I leave beautiful Ireland with regret. Marie Taglioni. Dublin, 23rd August '45."

This discovery aroused Walter Owen's curiosity, and he decided to search for information about Taglioni's visit to Ireland. Through a mutual friend, he was put in touch with Mr. Aubrey Tickner, a Dubliner who willingly devoted many hours poring over old newspapers for traces of the visits to Dublin made not only by Taglioni, but other renowned ballerinas of her time.

It was not long before packets of photostats began to reach Walter Owen, who one day showed them to Alicia Markova. Learning that Markova was particularly interested in a description of Taglioni's dancing which supported some theory of hers, Aubrey Tickner was delighted to hear that his research had proved of practical use, particularly since he held Markova in special admiration. "I compare her incredible gentleness," he wrote to Owen, "with the acrobatics, vulgarity, and nitwitism of so many dancers of today. It is years since I saw her, yet I clearly remember and am frustrated and sad in the knowledge that I shall not see her again, unless something approaching an absolute miracle happens."

When Markova heard these words, she exclaimed : "The answer to that is for me to dance in Dublin." And dance in Dublin she did, and Aubrey Tickner not only saw the performance but was invited backstage to meet her.

The extracts are all taken from the paper *The Freeman's Journal*, and as will be seen, they are much more than bald or polite accounts. Written in a more leisurely age, they often contain flashes of perceptive description that bring these performances to life and evoke for us today the nostalgic charm of years long past.

MARIE TAGLIONI first set foot on Irish soil on July 15, 1833, disembarking with her parents and her husband after a journey that was uneventful until their manservant fell into the water with some of the luggage. Tommey's Hotel in Sackville Street had the honour of lodging her during her stay.

She made her first appearance at the Theatre Royal on July 18, and danced sixteen times in all, her repertory consisting of three ballets or *divertissements — Aglaé et l'Amour, La Sylphide* and *La Bayadère* — as well as the *Tyrolienne* from *Guillaume Tell*, the *Menuet de la Cour and Gavotte of Vestris*, and *La Mazourka*, announced as a *"pas russe"*. Dublin could not provide a first-rate *corps de ballet*, and Filippo Taglioni sourly grumbled that the dancers he had to work with would have been called cobblers in any other country. His daughter did, however, have a proficient partner in James Silvain, whose real name was Sullivan.

Taglioni was the centre of attraction. The Bishop of Dublin visited her at the theatre, she dined with the Commander of the Garrison, and the Lord Lieutenant, the Marquis of Anglesey, spoke with her at the Dublin Garrison Races at Phoenix Park. At these races she must have been particularly gratified when Mr. Herbert's grey mare La Sylphide won a silver cup over a distance of half a mile. Mr. Herbert, it seems, was quite a balletomane, for he also entered a chestnut mare called Duvernay and a brown mare which he had renamed Natalie, presumably after her latest success in Paris.

The first notice, from *The Freeman's Journal* of July 19, described her Irish début :

"After the *Modern Antiques*, followed the *Ballet Divertisement* of *Aglaé et L'Amour*. The novelty of the evening was the first appearance, upon our boards, of Mademoiselle Taglioni. The attraction proved sufficient to fill the lower tier of boxes to overflowing, and to present, in the other parts of the house, an appearance as crowded, and certainly much more fashionable and brilliant than any we have witnessed during the season. The private boxes were occupied by parties. In one box we noticed the Ladies and Lord George Paget.

"The pieces selected for the first appearance of Mademoiselle Taglioni is without the slightest pretensions to dramatic merit. The opening scene represents L'Amour (Miss Harvey) resting on his bow and quiver, at the porch of his bower. The *Corps de Ballet* (of whose deeds anon) dance in groups, and throw garlands of flowers at the feet of the god. Lysias (Silvain) and Aglae (Taglioni) meet at the bower, where, after some graceful coquetry,

ANNOUNCEMENT for Marie Taglioni's benefit at the Theatre Royal, Dublin, on August 3, 1833, which appeared in The Freeman's Journal *on the previous day in the same year.*

THEATRE-ROYAL.

MADEMOISELLE TAGLIONI

Begs respectfully to announce that her BENEFIT, and most positively her last appearance in Ireland, will take place TO-MORROW, SATURDAY, AUGUST 3, on which occasion the performances will commence with the musical piece of

ROSINA.

Mr Belville, Mr Bedford; Captain Belville, Mr Brough William, Mr J. Penson; Rosina, Miss Adami; Phœbe, Mr Pettingal.

After which the Grand Ballet, in two acts, called

LA SYLPHIDE.

La Sylphide, Mdlle. Taglioni; James Rubens, M. Silvain Effie, Miss Garbois, her last appearance; Gwenn, M Barnet.

Between the First and second acts of the Ballet, the Orchestra will play the Overture to Der Freischutz.

After which the comic piece of

JOHN JONES.

Guy Goodluck, Mr Rees; Mr John Jones, Mr King; Eliza Melton, Mrs Pettingal.

The Entertainments will conclude with the celebrated Dance of

LA TYROLIENNE,

From the Opera of Guillaume Tell, as introduced in Cinderella, with full Chorus, by

Mademoiselle Taglioni, Monsieur Silvain, and Miss Garbois.

Tickets to be had of Mademoiselle Taglioni, at Tommey's Hotel, Sackville-street, and of Mr. Sharkey, at the Box-Office, where places may be secured.

Doors open at Seven, and performances commence at half past Seven, and terminate before half-past eleven.

LA SYLPHIDE : *Left is the print of Taglioni as La Sylphide now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Right is a pencil drawing of another scene from the same ballet, possibly by J. Branard in the collection of E. Kersley.*

Lysias falls in love, we presume (for we know not how he could have avoided it), with Aglae, and through the agency of L'Amour we have the usual *finale.*

"The appearance of Taglioni was hailed with the most enthusiastic applause. The entire house, ladies included, united in giving the stranger a most rapturous welcome. Her acknowledging *obeisance* to the audience, inconsiderable as this is generally regarded, was the signal for a renewal of applause — it was so graceful, so unaffectedly graceful, and of a character so different from that which is daily before us. She is above the middle height, of most exquisitely moulded form — in a female what a union of grace and strength! — and her features, without being handsome, are prepossessing, but rather devoid of expression. But those who went to see Taglioni, went to see, not a beauty, but an *artiste,* and were probably prepared to admire her feet rather than her face. To be *pleased* with the dancing of Taglioni, you must see her frequently ; until somewhat familiarised with them, you are lost in wonder at her singular powers. In looking for the first or the second time at those vaulting sweeps that she takes over the boards, surprised at the power, you are unable to appreciate the grace of the movement. What rapturous applause follows those wondrous *pirouettes!* — yet it is, in our opinion, drawn more from the surprise than the pleasure of the audience. Of course, no one will misunderstand us as intending to convey that the scene of last night was not eminently calculated to give pleasure. We only give our own impression — it was that of many around us — when we say, though our pleasure was much, our astonishment was infinitely more. The characteristic of the dancing of Taglioni is grace ; whatever she does, she does it gracefully. In the performance of last evening, she introduced a *gallopade* movement, calculated, as one would have thought, for the development only of muscular power. Yet how gracefully did her form float over the ground, as if air, not earth, had been her element ! It would be impossible to imagine anything more brilliant than her execution of the varied and surprising evolutions which she introduced in the course of the evening. Though our object is not to analyze her performance, yet we cannot but advert to the effect produced by some particular portions of it. Her *pirouettes* are, to borrow the ejaculation of a Frenchman who sat beside us, *vraiment superbes.* Those who have not seen Taglioni have no idea of the extraordinary manner in which she *'runs* those brilliant passages' (if we may be pardoned a pun and a musical metaphor) upon the very extremities of the foot. But we are going beyond the ordinary limits we devote to theatrical notice, and yet are we unable to convey more than a very faint idea of the powers and acquirements of this singularly gifted and accomplished *danseuse.*

"Monsieur Silvain appeared as Lysias. He possesses a wonderful pliancy of limb, and great power of execution, and was indeed a most efficient supporter of the *Terpsichore* of the evening. The different positions in which with Taglioni he appeared in the course of the evening were classically fine, and elicited loud applause.

"We were glad to see enough of *Irishism* in the house to bestow merited applause upon our own Harveys and Smiths. They exerted themselves a good deal, and to us appeared to dance with more effect than generally.

"The curtain fell amidst the most enthusiastic applause, and in compliance with the general, though most absurd, wish of the audience, Taglioni was led before the curtain by Mr. Calcraft (the theatre manager) and Monsieur Silvain. The applause was most rapturous."

In the issue of July 22nd, the same critic had more to say of Taglioni's style :

"A peculiarity in the style of Taglioni is the absence of rapidity of execution. The passages that most please in her dancing, please from being graceful, rather than brilliant. *'Cutting,'* to adopt the phraseology of the dancing academy, is what she seldom introduces, and when she does, it is in a style peculiar to herself. It is not the exhibition of muscular power, that might draw down plaudits from the benches of a *Gymnasium* ; but it is the easy, unlaboured movement of a creature of air, disporting in its own element. Again, mark her sweeping over the boards — see her light and graceful vaults, and call to mind the jumps of other *danseuses,* who seemed as if bounding from a spring-board at Astley's. What a contrast ! She, on Saturday evening, introduced a flight across the stage, on the points of the toes. This, though a feat of surpassing power, and one that, with another, must have been of great awkwardness, partook of all the ease and grace that characterizes all Taglioni's movements.

"We would call particular attention to the groups introduced in the course of the performance. What a study for the design of a statuary ! What classic models ! The last scene, the beautification of Aglaé, is of a most imposing description, and called down loud applause."

Everyone was anxious to see Taglioni in *La Sylphide,* which was the next ballet to be presented. Although created little more than a year before, in Paris, it was already a celebrated work. This is how *The Freeman's Journal* described the first Dublin performance.

Continued on page 34

AWARDS AND BIRTHDAYS: Left, Jerome Robbins receiving the City of New York's Scroll from Mayor Robert F. Wagner for his distinguished and exceptional service to international goodwill through his Ballets: U.S.A. (Photo: John Minutoli). Right, at the 80th birthday party of Ruth St. Denis, held at Martha Graham's studio, are Arthur Todd (Dance and Dancers *American correspondent), Martha Graham, Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn (Photo: Radford Bascome).*

curtain up!

Ballet venture, ballet gain

WITH both Royal Ballets unlikely to tour Britain for many months and with London's Festival Ballet in South America until the middle of summer, it seems that Britain's other companies may get more of a chance. First of all comes news of a new company that will start in the suburbs of London and called Ballet Venture 1960. It opens at the new Pembroke Theatre, Croydon, on March 14.

Norman Dixon, whose three ballets for Sunday Ballet Club have attracted a great deal of praise, was invited to form the group which will present these three and other works. Besides himself, the company will include Terry Gilbert, Keith Beckett, Patricia Ashworth and Selina Wylie — all soloists of great experience previously with Ballet Rambert and Festival Ballet. Also appearing will be Prudence Rodney, who was with the ill-fated Edinburgh International Ballet, and former Borovansky Ballet soloist — Pamela Proud.

In addition to the works already seen at Sunday Ballet Club, Dixon is creating a new light work, *Preciosa,* to Weber music. Terry Gilbert will mount a *pas de deux* showing a couple in a big present-day city, set to naturalistic sounds with a thread of music running through them. Keith Beckett will possibly produce a solo to Holst's *The Perfect Fool.*

An interesting feature of the season is that the theatre, opened only last October, has an arena stage with no proscenium and with seats on all sides. Although the American Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo has adapted eight of its ballets for presentation "in the round", Ballet Venture 1960 will be the first experiment in staging ballets in this way in England. All the works will be either created or re-worked specifically for this setting. It all sounds a very interesting venture to which we wish the best of luck.

New life for Western

WESTERN Ballet Theatre has had a brave and chequered career. It has made a serious attempt at presenting new and experimental creations and taking them to places unlikely to see Britain's full-size companies. In their bleak times the dancers have taken other jobs — but somehow they have managed to keep together in one way and another. Recently the company concluded a highly successful season at Monnaie's Theatre in Brussels and, after some performances in Jersey, it embarks on something which might well lead to the company becoming a more permanent feature in the British ballet scene.

Moss Empires, who control many provincial and London theatres, engaged the company for their theatre at Hanley for a week on February 15. If this season is successful then it is probable that Western Theatre Ballet will appear in all the Moss Empire Theatres. As the continual moan from readers in the provinces is that they see so little ballet, let us hope for everyone's sake that the people of Hanley flock in to see this company, as they have to see other companies in the past.

Morrice works on third

AND what of Ballet Rambert, who more than any other British company has pioneered through the provinces and, in fact, across the entire globe? At the moment they are touring, and during this time Norman Morrice is working on his next ballet. His two other ballets, *Two Brothers* and *Hazaña,* have been enormously successful if possibly rather serious in theme. Now, I hear, he is working on a rather lighter ballet that at the moment is to be called *Three Wise Monkeys.* To Shostakovitch's Concerto for trumpet, piano and strings, the story concerns the effect of the "Speak-no-evil, see-no-evil, hear-no-evil" monkeys on two pairs of lovers. As in Morrice's two other ballets he will use Ralph Koltai to design the setting and costumes. This looks like becoming another of those ballet partnerships between choreographer and designer as important as that which once existed between Frederick Ashton and Sophie Fedorovitch.

There are also rumours of a very famous Romantic two-act classic going into the Rambert repertory in addition to the possibility of an equally famous Romantic work by one of the greatest choreographers of today. But more of all this later.

Open meeting for Sunday

SUNDAY Ballet Club's next sabbatical engagement will not be a performance in the usual sense of the word — though it might possibly become a performance by some people just the same. Having reached a stage when the Club thinks it is necessary to publicly state its case and for the public, critics, choreographers, teachers and dancers to state theirs, they have decided to hold an open meeting.

On March 6, at the Arts Council building at 4 St. James's Square, the public are invited to an open meeting when the club will state its claims to distinction and usefulness — then the meeting will be thrown open for everyone to say what they think the future policy should be. As so much of creative ballet depends on organizations of this kind, I hope everybody interested will make a point of attending. The meeting starts at 7.30 p.m.

The boy most likely?

WHATEVER else it does, this month's performance by the Royal Ballet School of *Le Lac des Cygnes* must achieve one thing. For months now people have been saying to me, after all sorts of ballets, "Do you know, I just could not take my

eyes off Bryan Lawrence in the *corps de ballet.*" Now although I don't think that members of the *corps* are people that we should have brought to our notice too strongly, I am not entirely surprised. Ever since he came back from his national service most of us have noticed him — with perhaps a quarter of an eye. With the old Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet he was one of a pair of outstanding young men, the other part of the pair was Donald MacLeary, today one of the Royal Ballet's principals. It was therefore hardly surprising that as Lawrence worked back into his old form — and beyond — he was being noticed by more and more people. So what a relief for them it will be when, at the School matinée on March 19, he dances the principal male rôle, Prince Siegfried ; for the first time everybody can watch the main character instead of concentrating on a boy in the background !

Vox populi, box office

ALL too often in the past, those responsible for producing so-called ballets which seem intended only to appeal to the very lowest common denominator of public taste have excused themselves by saying that they have no subsidy and must be entertaining in order to keep going.

This season, the tills at Covent Garden have been kept jingling pretty busily by the crowds anxious to see the two new productions — Cranko's *Antigone* and Ashton's *La Fille Mal Gardée.* Two ballets more different from each other you couldn't imagine, but they have just one thing in common — the public finds them good entertainment. And yet both are immediately recognisable as good ballets, so people will keep on coming back to them instead of being sated at one sitting.

Stork news

RUSSIAN-ENGLISH-ITALIAN ballerina Violetta Elvin has given birth to her first child — a son. Although she no longer dances, it seems somehow unworthy to call her an ex-ballerina, as in the hearts of her so many admirers in this country she will remain an exotic and beautiful person who brought much-needed glamour to immediate post-war British ballet. Her son was born in Italy, where she and her Neapolitan lawyer husband live in sunshine and happiness. May this child, and possibly some others, bring added happiness to one whom we shall always remember with love and affection.

Dance and Dancers got on to the wrong stork wavelength when we announced that the twins born to Maryon Lane and David Blair arrived on this earth *before* midnight on January 31 last. Maryon Lane has written to correct us and said that in fact her twins were the *first* to start off a new decade at Queen Charlotte's Hospital. Her first daughter arrived at 2.55 and her second at 3.15 on January 1. Sorry Blairs ! Sorry Storks !

Well-groomed ballerina

AMERICAN ballerina Nora Kaye coyly re-entered the matrimonial state last August. So coyly, in fact, that her own parents were not in a position to announce the glad tidings for some months ; so coyly also that she never breathed a word of it to her dearest friends in Britain when she passed through on her way to Russia. The reason for all this secrecy completely escapes us, but we wish them both great happiness none the less. Her latest groom, her third, is choreographer Herbert Ross, whose early work was that never-to-be-forgotten *Caprichos* for Ballet Theatre some years ago. Mr. and Mrs. Ross are confidently expected to re-join Ballet Theatre for their 20th Anniversary season at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York this Spring. After that they leave for Europe with their own company — Ballet of Two Worlds — which may be in England around mid-summer.

Sick listers

THE early days of any new year bring a crop of people on the sick-list — this year no less than any other. Most important absentee has been Dame Ninette de Valois, who has been ill for some time with back trouble. She had to cancel her proposed visit to South Africa with the Royal Ballet's touring company ; she also missed the first night of *La Fille Mal Gardée.* Determined to see it she came up to London from her Sunningdale home in order to see it later — the next day she was back in bed again.

Royal Ballet's Pirmin Trecu has been in Bart's hospital with a suspected virus infection. Particularly sickening for him as he was lined up to dance several leading rôles : in *Les Rendezvous,* and partnering Lynn Seymour in *Les Sylphides* and *Giselle.* He may still be better in time to dance his first-ever Albrecht to Seymour's début as Giselle.

Van Praagh for Australia

THE reports in the press were misleading when they announced that Peggy Van Praagh would go to Australia to take over the directorship of the Borovansky Ballet. She tells me that this is not strictly true because she leaves at the end of March for Australia where she will remain for six months as *advisory* director. In fact she will go to help them through the difficult period resulting from the recent death of Edouard Borovansky.

Death of the 'Father'

AS we go press, the death is announced of painter and designer Alexandre Benois on February 9 at the age of 89. As one of the instigators of the Diaghilev company he has frequently been called "the father of Russian ballet". In the next issue we shall publish an account and appreciation of this great man's career.

Hark the Herold angel

SURPRISE for the Covent Garden management on the first night of *La Fille Mal Gardée.* Someone thoughtfully left a pair of tickets at the stage door for M. Hérold. But this composer of the oldest ballet in the European repertory did not turn up to collect them.

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happy birthday to...

		March
Joan Benesh	Royal Ballet Organisation	26
Léonide Massine	Nervi Festival Ballet	26
Joan Harris	State Opera, Munich	26
Jeffrey Kovel	Borovansky Ballet	29
Ivan Baptie	London's Festival Ballet	31
		April
Shirley Bishop	The Royal Ballet	1
Leo Kersley	Teaching in England	1
Yanis Metsis	Athens Opera	2
Edward Caton	De Cuevas International Ballet	2
Michael Boulton		3
Lydia Sokolova		4
Antony Tudor	Choreographer in America	4
Wasil Tupin	De Cuevas International Ballet	4
Diane Westerman	London's Festival Ballet	5
Keith Lester	Choreographer at Windmill Theatre	9
Judith Sinclair		12
Keith Milland	The Royal Ballet	16
Henry Legerton	The Royal Ballet	17
Janet Kedge	London's Festival Ballet	18
Algeranoff	Borovansky Ballet	18
John Taras	New York City Ballet	18
Sallie Wilson	American Ballet Theatre	18
Jennifer Alderton	London's Festival Ballet	18
Gary Burne	The Royal Ballet	20
Richard Beaty	American Ballet Theatre	20
Elsa Marianne von Rosen	Dancing in Sweden	21
Ronald Hynd	The Royal Ballet	22
Milena Vukotic	De Cuevas International Ballet	23
Claudie Algeranova	Stadttheater, Lucerne	24
Angela Leigh	Canadian National Ballet	24
Armando Navarro	De Cuevas International Ballet	24
Kenneth Melville	Dancing In America	24

THEIR FUTURE DETERMINED : David Blair and his wife Maryon Lane holding their twin girls — Diana and Catherine. But what is Maryon Lane holding? Two pairs of tiny ballet shoes, a present from the famous shoe-making firm of Frederick Freed, who seem to have decided their future from the start. (See "Stork News" on this page.) Photo : Barratt's.

The Metropolitan Ballet

(Part 2)

by JOHN PERCIVAL

In last month's article, John Percival wrote of the company's history. In this final article he sums up the company's achievements.

It would be possible to speculate on the company's finances, but in the absence of any published facts this would be unrewarding. What is obvious is that a troupe of 30 or more dancers, with an orchestra and even the minimum staff, playing mostly in theatres where the prices of the seats ranged from about 1s. 6d. to not more than 7 or 8 shillings, must have been a pretty precarious venture at the best of times. The wonder is not that it ended when it did, but that it survived so long.

There was a sad little epilogue before the company finally disbanded. On December 9 and 14 they gave two performances of *The Dance of Salome,* a dance drama specially created for B.B.C. Television by Franca. I did not see this, but from accounts it seems I did not miss much.

Ten years later, nothing tangible remains of Metropolitan Ballet unless we count the revival of *Designs with Strings* still in the repertory of the Royal Danish Ballet.

There are, of course, various intangible results of the company's existence. It was Metropolitan which first brought Beriosova into British ballet. One would think that a dancer with the talent and immense potentiality which she showed even when only just past her fifteenth birthday would surely not have gone long without being snapped up by the alert director of one of the major companies; yet we all know that little niggling difficulties sometimes stand in the way of even the most obvious steps, and most of us can think of dancers, sometimes very promising, whose talent has been strangely neglected.

The fact is that Metropolitan, for all their limited resources, were apparently able to offer Beriosova a more attractive engagement than any other company, and, had they not done so, it is more than possible that she might not now have been one of the most valuable ballerinas at Covent Garden.

Similarly, John Lanchbery came to British ballet by way of Metropolitan, where he proved himself, despite the often inadequate resources at his disposal, to be one of those rare conductors who can reconcile the two separate and sometimes conflicting demands of ballet music, namely to sound good on its own account and to provide a good accompaniment for dancing. Now belatedly arrived at Covent Garden after years at Sadler's Wells and on tour, he shows promise of restoring to the opera house some part of what it has lacked since Constant Lambert's time.

Canada, perhaps, gained even more than Britain from Metropolitan Ballet, since Beriosova and Lanchbery have only added lustre to a fine company, but in Canada, Celia Franca has created a major company from scratch. Franca had wide experience as a dancer before joining Metropolitan, and had created several ballets, but it is reasonable to suppose that her duties as ballet mistress with Metropolitan did more than anything else to fit her for the formidable task which faced her in forming and directing the National Ballet of Canada. One of her leading dancers there has been David Adams, another Metropolitan alumnus who, if he has fulfilled his early promise (and all accounts agree he has), must now be an outstanding *premier danseur.*

It would be possible, if space permitted, to list many other dancers who, having had their first chance with Metropolitan, are now making a decent and honourable career for themselves elsewhere. Dancers like Hyrst, now principal dancer and choreographer to another new company in Canada; or like Geoffrey Webb and Josephine Gordon, who have achieved success in musicals.

There are also many of whose subsequent career I know nothing — Cynthia Allegro or Ursula Hewlett, for instance, two of the young soloists whom the company developed from its own ranks to give creditable performances in *Igor* and *Spectre* respectively. At the very least they have had the satisfaction of dancing these rôles really well, and their names must stand as representative of many others.

There were many advantages, too, in the Metropolitan policy of engaging foreign dancers, not just as guest stars for short seasons, but usually to dance in the regular repertory for a period. We gained the chance of seeing many interesting artists, often at a formative time in their careers — and the advantages worked both ways. Bruhn, for instance, now one of the most distinguished male dancers in any country, made great progress while with Metropolitan, and during that time he had the opportunity to dance almost as often each month as he would have done in a whole year in Copenhagen.

Incidentally, Metropolitan were the first company since Adeline Genée's London triumphs to show how well Danish dancers can fit into a British company — an example which Festival Ballet have since followed with great success.

In spite of all the company's merits, however, and the advantages arising from its existence, I think it must be said in the final analysis that Metropolitan Ballet failed because it was not quite good enough. Fundamentally, the worth of a company derives from the fact that it preserves a valuable tradition or creates something of comparable value.

Some of Metropolitan's revivals of ballets by Petipa, Fokine and Massine had great merit, but no one really expects a group of 30 young dancers to do much towards saving and handing down the classical tradition, and here Metropolitan could hardly hope to compete with the resources of the Covent Garden company. Metropolitan had, indeed, in Beriosova, a ballerina in embryo—but for only two weeks in nearly three years could they offer her the chance to work on the same stage as a really great ballerina whom she could take as her model. So we looked to the new works to justify the company's existence.

Here the company was handicapped from the start by the poverty of the initial repertory. The only decent thing to do with most of these works was to bury them as soon as possible. This was done, but for about half the company's lifetime they formed an appalling barrier to progress, dragging down the level of the early programmes and, since the new works had to replace them, preventing the desirable enlargement of the total number of ballets in the repertory.

Many people had a hand in the artistic direction and management of the company: Gsovsky, Littlewood, Hepner, Kirsta, Franca, Beriosoff. Continuity was provided by Mrs. Cecilia Blatch, who backed the company and was named on the programmes first as secretary and later as director-general.

Given either first-rate artistic direction by one exceptionally talented and authoritative person, or really astute business management (or preferably both), Metropolitan Ballet might have overcome its initial disadvantages. As it was, the company came surprisingly near success.

The standards of the repertory rose continually, and more completely new works were mounted in the last year than in the first two years together. These included three ballets to specially written scores; and a new ballet by Franca, also with a commissioned score, was planned.

Nine different choreographers had already created new works for the company, and most of them were relatively or entirely inexperienced. No great new genius came to light in consequence, but the experiment was at least made, and was worth making.

The great virtue of Metropolitan Ballet was that it would always give a chance to young and unproved talent. It tried to do something creative. It aimed high, and looked as if it might achieve its aims. It won not only respect but affection. In the end, it failed; but it failed gallantly, and British ballet might have been richer if it had succeeded.

Dance and Dancers . . . . AT HOME

THE ROYAL BALLET at Covent Garden

Sibley as Swanilda

ALTHOUGH for some time now it has not needed a great deal of clairvoyance to predict that Antoinette Sibley would eventually make her mark, and a pretty incisive one at that, in the Royal Ballet, her performance of Swanilda last Spring with the students of the Royal Ballet School came as something of a revelation. This performance was reviewed at length last year. Then, she was playing her first full-length rôle, and since then she has taken over the Odette/Odile rôle *Le Lac des Cygnes* and received more publicity than has possibly ever been accorded to any other dancer taking over an important part at short notice. Publicity often has a nasty habit of dangling its entrails in the face of the publicised person, and I know that last month I was worried about a not very happy performance by Sibley in the *Lac* first act *pas de trois.* Would her tendency to affectation and exaggeration have become more pronounced in between that first attempt at Swanilda and her performance in *Coppélia* with the Royal Ballet on December 12?

I am happy to say that her Swanilda has matured in the intervening months — now it is assured, unaffected and utterly charm-

ing. Her technique, always immaculate, has now become integrated in her conception of the rôle, for while she dances everything cleanly and beautifully she invests the village girl, who puts her flirtatious swain to the test, with life and vitality. Her Franz, Graham Usher, also in the same student performance, makes a splendid foil to her. Usher still needs to develop Franz's character in the first act which tends to be rather busy, but by the final act he had settled down and danced the variation as well as, if not better than, the finest the Royal Ballet has ever had to offer in this part.

The performance of the whole company acted as a highly satisfactory framework for these two. Lambert Cox made a very sympathetic old eccentric of Dr. Coppelius and, in the final act *divertissement*, Deanne Bergsma gave a particularly good account of herself in that corny solo — Prayer. In the past I have had some rather acid things to say about Swanilda's friends, who have never appeared to me to be such as I would choose for her — that is as far as dancing is concerned — now the most exacting old chaperone could hardly complain of these friends — from any point of view. So good were they that they should be named. They were Mavis Osborn, Hylda Zinkin, Robin Haig, Ann Howard, Debra Wayne and Margaret Lyons.

P. W.

Pagodas revisited

IT is unlikely that anybody at any time will consider the Cranko/Britten *Prince of the Pagodas* to be one of the most satisfactory full-length ballets ever created, yet in many ways some of its ingredients would suggest otherwise. Its revival this season on January 6 gave opportunity to re-assess this rather patch-work piece of ballet making. Its fairy tale theme, concocted by Cranko from a number of sources which would seem to include *The Frog Prince* and *King Lear*, ends up by being pallid. Its décor, at all times undistinguished Piper, has now become an embarrassment. Cranko's choreography, in spite of many moments of invention and extreme ingenuity, leaves an overriding final impression of being unmusical. On the credit side, there are some exceedingly elegant costumes by Desmond Heeley, a magnificent score by Benjamin Britten (whose magnificence today is dimmed by occasionally excruciating orchestral playing and sluggish conducting) matched by the performance the company now gives it.

The rôle of La Belle Rose, a downtrodden younger daughter who becomes involved in a magical journey, is such a slightly sketched-in conception that it is hard for anyone to give it the light and shade that makes a character other than flat and meaningless. It is possible, of course, that Princess Aurora in *Sleeping Beauty* was originally rather like this — it still can be in the hands of some ballerinas. But over the years various artists can build up the bricks of these strawless parts until the audiences are fooled into believing that they are stronger than they actually are. In such a way has Fonteyn identified herself with Princess Aurora for all time. The Belle Rose rôle in *Pagodas* was of course created by Beriosova and in the beginning she gave it with grace and charm with a flash or two of grandeur. Today it is something much more — she has snuggled into the part's very diaphanous fabric until the impression left is that Belle Rose is a person of flesh and bone. Exactly how much this rôle is personal to her was made even more apparent when Anya Linden took it over on January 20. Linden is a beautiful girl with an exquisite head on her long neck and she succeeds in looking all youth and innocence.

ZAMBRA : Rosa Duran, the principal dancer of the Zambra Flamenco Club in Madrid, dancing La Petinera *during a performance which the group is giving at the Palace Theatre, London. A full review of the company will appear in the next issue.*
Photo : Lido.

She has also made enormous strides of late in all her ballerina rôles, but somehow in this particular part she remains but a weak carbon copy of Beriosova, and it was not until the last act that she came into her own when she achieved moments of considerable authority — but the rôle never had really come alive.

The same could be said of the two Princes of the Pagodas. Blair, who created it, can possibly never be surpassed, particularly in the sinuous movements when he is still a salamander — the curl of his body and his slithery slithy crawlings bring out the contrast between the human and animal sides of this enchanted Prince. The sheer bravura of his dancing in the final scene brings about an apotheosis that structurally the ballet never had. Hynd, who partnered Linden, looked most handsome and he danced adequately, but I could never believe in his animal side at all. If the ballet were given more frequently these second casts would get more chance to do what the years have given to Beriosova and Blair. In both performances the rest of the cast was principally the same. Leslie Edwards has built up his doddering and duped old Emperor of the Middle Kingdom until now he brings the only definite passages of drama that the ballet contains. Julia Farron, as the wicked Princess Belle Epine, seldom fails to give a striking performance, though on the second showing she was rather wobbly. Ray Powell's Dwarf is particularly effective in its horridness. The Fool was played on the first occasion by Pirmin Trecu and on the second by Graham Usher the former was more touching but the latter was better danced and Usher makes a most effective entrance in the first act.

Of the four suitors for the hand of the heiress to the crown of the Middle Kingdom, Peter Clegg and Gary Burne remain from the original cast and are as good as ever they were. Two newcomers are Keith Rosson to the King of the North and Derek Rencher to the King of the East. Rosson brings an animal vitality to the northern gentleman, whose variation has been considerably changed, and he gives more importance to what was always a weak variation. To the King of the East, whose movements cover many thousand miles in Oriental posturing, Derek Rencher brings humour and a polished elegance ; later he showed that he has greatly improved in the last act *pas de six*. His development in what are erroneously termed "minor rôles" is gradually making him a most valuable member of the company.

In the second act *divertissement*, Brian Shaw and Merle Park danced away with the honours as Rulers of the Fire, both providing the evening's first moments of virtuosity. This is the sort of thing that Shaw can do

to perfection unmatched by any other member of the company; Park, a beautifully polished dancer if ever there was one, gave as good a performance as anyone is ever likely to following Maryon Lane in the parts she has created. Georgina Parkinson's slender figure, passing crescent-shaped through the clouds, was effective as a pre-Soviet-rocket-struck Moon.

In the final act *Pas de Six*, it was the *pas de deux* for Doreen Wells and Derek Rencher that came off best. Something seems to have happened to the synchronisation of the finger clicks in Merle Park's variation which sound, from where I sit in the stalls, as if they are coming from the gallery — and rather late. Gary Burne bounces and bounds through his variation with his accustomed eloquence in spite of an uncomplimentary hair-style.

On the whole the dancing all through these two performances was of the high order that the Royal Ballet, over the past few months, have given us reason to expect. A pity it could not all be used to better purpose than in this hotch-potch work. With his recently regained seriousness of purpose it would almost be worth Cranko's while to reconstruct this ballet on the firm foundation of Britten's score.

P. W.

Cast changes

LAST in the Christmas quartet of ballerinas for Ashton's *Cinderella* was Nadia Nerina, partnered by David Blair. Nerina, like the other three Cinderellas reviewed last month (Fonteyn, Beriosova and Linden), was in excellent form. Her first act was more notable for its genial humour than pathos, and her dancing did not really come into its own until the radiant second act. In the last act her performance was slightly marred by her coming off point in the *pas de deux* (a common enough occurrence here, yet an unexpected lapse from Nerina and Blair), nevertheless it remained a well-judged and skilful portrayal. Blair, at this performance on the afternoon of January 16, partnered splendidly but was dancing a little below his own best, and the sheer dance honours of the afternoon went to Brian Shaw as a mercurial Jester. Georgina Parkinson, a fluent newcomer to the rôle of Fairy Summer, made a good impression.

The performance of *Coppélia* on the afternoon of January 23 found Merle Park and Gary Burne making perhaps their best showing so far as Swanilda and Franz. Exhilaratingly danced and engagingly played, the ballet emerged with a good deal more freshness and charm than is usual. Merle Park's Swanilda is always a delight, but it was notable that Burne, markedly improved from his earlier press night, was both more subdued and yet at the same time apparently more spontaneous. His actual dancing, also better than before, proved tidier yet without any notable sacrifice of *panache*.

Leslie Edwards, for years a steady and reliable artist, is nowadays developing into something a very great deal more. It is not so many years since his Dr. Coppelius was conscientious yet not overly interesting. Now he has made it into a genuine — and seemingly still unfinished — portrait. It is remarkable how much Edwards changes the details of his interpretation from performance to performance; on this occasion for example his second act in particular appeared to be quite different from what he has done before, and the interplay between himself and Park was a special joy. However, the results of his continual experiments in the characterisation tends to make it still somewhat tentative — more a series of cameos than a complete whole. One has the feeling that this is still nowhere near so impressive a performance as he is going to give in the future. What is most encouraging is the manner in which, together with one or two other members of the company, he appears to be either unconsciously or deliberately turning his back on the old stilted mime — the inarticulate, semaphore-style system that British ballet once picked up as a job-lot by misunderstanding the Maryinsky classical mime — and moving rapidly towards the truly expressive naturalistic gestures of the Danes and the Soviet Russians.

The performance was also notable for the appearance of Lynn Seymour, making her début as a member of the resident Covent Garden company. Dancing Aurora in the last act, her entry had a moment of grandeur that for me irresistibly recalled that performance a few years ago when Beriosova made her very first entrance as the Lilac Fairy. She took the stage with just the same complete assurance and quite unflustered serenity. Seymour chose an individual and unusually lyrical approach to a variation in which she was not perhaps ideally cast. Probably nothing in the exquisitely-danced solo was quite so exciting as her first appearance, except a brief moment in the *finale* when she did a couple of superb leaps across the stage *à la Russe*.

The performance of *Façade* following *Coppélia* marked the reappearance of Stanley Holden as the Dago. In fact, Holden had danced the part unannounced a few weeks previously, taking over at literally a moment's notice from Alexander Grant, but this was his official Covent Garden début in the ballet.

The most surprising thing about his appearance in the rôle is that he has not been called upon to dance it at Covent Garden earlier, for he was the most famous of all Theatre Ballet Dagos, and generally regarded as among the rôle's best-ever interpreters. The unique barrow-boy spiv who used to convulse Sadler's Wells audiences has, however, apparently been replaced by a new characterisation, considerably more suave and subtle. Nowadays Holden has learnt the art of making his fullest effect by under-playing, and although he still delightfully suggests the *palais de danse* more than the Dorchester, his perfectly valid Cockney gigolo is now observed with more wit and accuracy. Rosemary Lindsay made him a perfect partner, being better matched by his subtlety than by the more knockabout humour of Grant's Dago.

On the evening of February 6, Seymour made her second appearance with the company, dancing the Mazurka and *Pas de Deux* in *Les Sylphides*. Technically her point work was a little uncertain, yet she captured the essence of the ballet with unerring skill. It was a lovely, enraptured performance, with poignantly poetic arm movements, a general air of romantic fervour and some, as yet isolated, moments of magnificence. She was well-matched, but not altogether well-partnered, by Richard Farley. He looked better in the rôle of the Poet than almost any British dancer I can recall, combining romanticism with virility. His dancing was forthright yet sensitive, and in the *finale* his jumps were thrillingly caught up with the music. All in all it was the most promising thing this rapidly improving dancer has so far given us.

The Waltz is very probably the most difficult part in the whole ballet, and its phrasing is the cruellest test I know of a dancer's musicality. Merle Park danced it wonderfully, and its difficulties seemed to fade away into the mist. Light, fleeting and fanciful, Park lived up to every one of Fokine's requirements. Georgina Parkinson's Prélude was not at quite the same level as the rest of the cast, lacking something both in spirit and expression.

C. B.

LONDON'S FESTIVAL BALLET at the Royal Festival Hall

South Bank Christmas Card

IT is possible to imagine that Festival Ballet might be reluctant to extend invitations to the Press after the basting they got for ballets such as *London Morning*; on the other hand they have nothing to be ashamed of with their annual Christmas pantomime — the full-length *The Nutcracker*. Nobody has ever had any illusions about its greatness as a ballet, and apart from the Tchaikovsky score it must amount to one of the least distinguished works to emerge from the St. Petersburg stable, but it makes most engaging Christmas entertainment. Far, far better than most of those old stand-bys that are trotted out religiously and drearily around the so-called festive season.

I remember that when I wrote about this production when it was first mounted at Festival Hall on December 24, 1957, I earnestly implored the management to wrap the production up and pack it away, like Christmas decorations, to be brought out only at this season of the year. Any part of it, I felt, given during the months of sunshine would cause the whole thing to melt. Unfortunately they have brought the second act out in most of the year's other months and it has started to melt, with the result that some of the meltings have dribbled over the first act also. What no management seems to realise — and Festival Ballet is not alone in this respect — is that a ballet, however unsatisfactory, is conceived as a whole and that you cannot just wrench an act out here and there without damaging that whole. Admittedly *The Nutcracker's* Kingdom of Sweets act is mainly a *divertissement*, just as is the last act of *The Sleeping Beauty*, but they are a culmination — something we have been leading up to possibly for several hours. Given just by themselves, these acts are bald and we are not conditioned or properly prepared for them.

But in spite of occasional tattiness here and there *The Nutcracker* as a whole stands up very well. Alexandre Benois' designs are absolutely right for the shape of the music and for the atmosphere they provoke — a child's-eye vision of Christmas and all that goes with it. When I hear, as I often do, people say that the Sweet Kingdom looks most indigestible, I get very angry because they are referring to the act when it is given by itself. In the full-length ballet it follows most adroitly on after the boisterous party and the cool Land of Snow. They were never intended to be sophisticated sweets like those from the Marquis de Sevigny, but the sort of sweets that children know and have possibly bought with their money-box pennies at the village shop.

Apart from the children, the company plays the party scene less well than previously and look as though they need David Lichine to come along and produce them again. The regular stand-bys such as Peter White and Janet Overton as Councillor Von Stabhlbaum and his wife were excellent as always, but some of the others were most unconvincing and their make-up was atrocious. Dolin was exaggerating his Dr. Drosselmeyer but as he had only just returned to the stage after his foot accident this was rather excusable. But the children

led by Mary Willis (Clara) and Roy Jones (Fritz) were enchanting and credit must be due to Grace Cone's Arts Educational School at which they are students. It was a pity that the older and more professionally experienced party-goers could not have learnt something from them.

John Gilpin made a wonderful entrance as the Nutcracker Prince but the rest of his dancing, though aristocratic and brilliant as he cannot help being, appeared to be rather strained. It was not until later that I heard that he was dancing in great pain and was beginning his relaxed disc trouble. Even at the cost of breaking with tradition, I still think that the "Snowflakes" *pas de deux* should be restored — a rather shaggy *ballabile* is not enough to bring the Land of Snow scene to any sort of height.

In the last act, Gilpin renewed his old partnership with Belinda Wright who was the Sugar Plum Fairy. Possibly infected by Gilpin's straining, she was dancing less well than when the two of them danced the *Harlequinade pas de deux* at the recent R.A.D. Gala. However, it was a great pleasure to see them dancing together again and she brings the true spirit of charm and gaiety to this fairy creature.

The remainder of the sweets, most of them in the rôles they originally created three years ago, went through their various national paces efficiently. Jean-Pierre Alban, replacing Keith Beckett as Wendy Barry's swain in the *Danse Arabe,* seemed to have changed the choreography slightly — and very much for the better. He brought a sense of grave humour to a dance which can sometimes be rather an embarrassment. In fact he invested this character dance with more decided character than was apparent in any of the others.

Taken all in all, and considering it was playing twice daily, Festival Ballet's *The Nutcracker* is still the entertainment I would most rather take a child to at Christmas while getting a great deal of enjoyment out of it myself. **P. W.**

DANCING IN PANTOMIME

PANTOMIME, which seems to have almost nothing to do with the true meaning of its name and is in fact one of the noisiest entertainments, is an English seasonal peculiarity. If it does not stick to its own dotty tradition there seems to be little point. What after all is a British pantomime without a travestie principal boy — those jolly hippy ladies who sing rollicking thigh-slapping numbers? No point at all really, though London's two principal pantomimes — *Aladdin* at the Coliseum and *Humpty Dumpty* at the Palladium — manage to do without them and still play to capacity business. It has also been a tradition that there shall be ballet and this seems to be the only respect paid to the old traditional formula which has been slavishly adhered to, in the past, whatever the subject or locality.

Aladdin, with its Cole Porter music and tremendously elaborate Loudon Sainthill designs, is little more than a musical extravaganza out of the same oil jar as *Chu Chin Chow.* Almost giddy I got from all the revolving scenes which took us in and around Peking with a brief flight to Morocco. The production and choreography was in the hands of Robert Helpmann, who appeared to have culled his ideas from a number of sources and choreographers. However, as this practice is more in the tradition of pantomime than anything else about the show it hardly mattered. Even if on no count could the choreography have been called distinguished, at least it brought Anne Heaton back to the stage as a Diamond Fairy who glittered so much that she obscured the capabilities of anyone else in the show in her two scenes — in the Garden of Jewelled Fruit and in the Kingdom of Cool Whiteness. She looked gorgeous and she danced with all the authority that is supposed to be the perogative of well-born fairies. She was sloppily partnered by a number of gentlemen but not by Geoffrey Webb who was billed as a principal male dancer. He had very little to do though I am told that later in the run, understudying Bob Monkhouse in the title rôle, he gave a splendid performance which brought to the whole show something it had previously lacked. When I saw it, Heaton was the undoubted star, as were the beautiful costumes of Sainthill, and particularly a ravishing number for some ladies dancing with white fans.

Even without a principal boy, *Humpty Dumpty* was far more traditional and an infinitely better constructed show — it even made me laugh. Less revolving stages here (*Aladdin* used three) but plenty of effects with several transformations and flying thrown in for good measure. Peter Darrell was responsible for the choreography here and Marina Svetlova was the *Prima Ballerina* surrounded by an effective bunch of dancing boys and girls. The choreography was unpretentious and far nearer to what we expect at Christmas time. Svetlova appeared in a drifty dreamy solo in the Autumn part of the Pageant of the Four Seasons and after a quick change, from autumnal draperies to sparkling white tutu, during which time the scenery also did a number of exciting things, she appeared as the spirit of Winter. She has a tendency to poke her head forward but otherwise she was far closer to the generally held view of what a pantomime fairy should be. **P. W.**

PANTOMIME BALLET: Marina Svetlova in the Winter scene from Peter Darrell's Four Seasons Ballet *in the pantomime* Humpty-Dumpty, *at the London Palladium.*
Photo: Hoffman.

TELEVISION

Presented on BBC Television in Monitor **on January 17, with the Ballet Rambert in excerpts from** Death and the Maiden **and** Judgment of Paris.

I SUPPOSE it was inevitable that Marie Rambert should burst into *Monitor* sooner or later. Madame Rambert came over as extravagantly larger than life as she is to the world at large. "No, Nijinsky did not remain suspended in the air, though he did manage to give that illusion." Memories of Diaghilev, Markova and Ashton were recalled, with a filmed scene of Ashton himself dancing the rôle of Monsieur Pirouette in the once highly popular *Foyer de Danse.* Yes, she admitted that she had a nose which specialised in smelling out talent, and "Andrée Howard" was given as the answer to a question: "Madame Rambert, which of your choreographers showed the most unexpected talent?"

But the highspot of the interview was her shrewdly timed and statesmanlike peroration which, to be sure, looks terribly pat in print. "No, I should not want a company as large as the Royal Ballet. Now I think (she said obligingly) we must all acknowledge it to be our magnificent National Gallery of the Dance. I hope this won't sound too boastful (pause), but I should like *my* company (with spirit) to be the equivalent of the Tate Gallery."

As there was no work which showed the whole company dancing, the programme may have left an impression that the Ballet Rambert was a small chamber group of about eight soloists. In *Death and the Maiden,* clearly the better of the extracts, the cameras penetrated deeply into the action to show June Sandbrook in a series of persuasive close-ups. The effect was so staggering that one could only feel that if the whole work was produced at such a standard it would make a superb television ballet.

Judgment of Paris did not fare so well. After the build-up on Antony Tudor's importance, I imagine viewers would have expected something far less honky-tonk than this. But, given without hints about the background, it must have mystified many. Gillian Martlew, looking the eldest of the trio of absurdly young goddesses, gave an amusing performance as the hoop-Venus, though even she was rather less effective than her stage self. **E. C. M.**

FRANCE

OPERA-COMIQUE

Les Pas et les Lignes

First presented at the Opéra-Comique on January 15. Music, Debussy (Petite Suite). **Theme and choreography by Serge Lifar.**

CLAUDE BESSY ATTILIO LABIS

CONCEIVED some time ago by Lifar as a vehicle for Claude Bessy and Max Bozzoni, a *pas de deux* has seldom been more aptly named than this. With a very light emotional content which enhances the expressiveness of the choreography, it is essentially a neo-classical work in which the movements develop harmonious'y. The line which the leg of the ballerina sketches is prolonged by the arm of her partner. The steps come alive and thus geometry is made human. Claude Bessy's qualities in particular are shown to their greatest advantage, and though perhaps still a little unsure of himself, Attilio Labis displayed elegance and a plastic beauty. He does, however, lack expression. No doubt he will learn to remedy this shortcoming.

Studio 60

First presented at the Opéra-Comique on January 15. Music by Robert Bergmann. Décor by Félix Labisse. Choreography by Claude Bessy.

CLAUDE BESSY MICHEL RAYNE
and *corps de ballet*

SOME jazz dancers enter an empty studio and start to practice. A classical ballerina wanders in by mistake. Lost in a dream she goes to the *barre* and then joins the modern dancers, without realising her mistake. They gather round her in surprise — first of all, they want to turn her out, then they try to convert her, and the two styles of dancing conflict before coming to terms with each other.

On this simple theme Claude Bessy has constructed a work which is lively, unpretentious and worthy of praise. Her experience in the United States and also through working with Gene Kelly has enabled her to present the conflict of these two types of dance with an attractive spontaneity and charm. Though her choreography is not very original, at least it is adroit and humorous, and it does feature satisfactorily the vocabulary peculiar to each school. She has certainly managed to give point to the details of this amusing little incident. In the rôle of the ballerina, Claude Bessy herself proves again (though who would have doubted them?) her qualities of perfect naturalness as she passes from dreaminess to scandalised shock, and then to conversion — all with complete conviction and great charm. She is very well partnered by Michel Rayne, who gave an excellent performance and communicated his enthusiasm to a small *corps de ballet* which is very amused at her adventure.

Robert Bergmann, director of the Ecole de Musique at Mulhouse, has always shown a special interest in jazz, and many people in France even consider him to be the founder of symbolic jazz. He was, therefore, extremely well qualified for this subject, which he has treated with verve. Félix Labisse has animated the work with a striking décor and vivid and gay costumes. This collaboration has scored a success for the Opéra-Comique which is likely to repair the damage done by Chazot's recent *Fête Arlésienne.*

Piece Choregraphic

First presented at the Opéra-Comique on January 15. Music by Weber. Choreography by Peter Van Dijk.

MADELEINE LAFON
JACQUELINE RAYET
PETER VAN DIJK LUCIEN DUTHOIT
ATTILIO LABIS

PARIS OPERA REHEARSAL: Tatiana Gsovsky rehearsing Yvette Chauviré and George Skibine in her ballet La Dame aux Camélias, *which has gone into the repertory of the Paris Opéra. Chauviré scored a great success when this ballet was created in Berlin some time ago.* *Photo: Lido.*

WE rarely have our wishes fulfilled so speedily. When we recently saw Peter Van Dijk's *Pas de cinq* staged under the auspices of the Jeunesses Musicales de France we applauded the quality, the verve, the humour and the musicality of this work, and expressed our hope of seeing it included in the Opéra-Comique's programme. A good fairy no doubt heard our prayers, and re-christened the work *Pièce chorégraphique*, replaced Cyril Atanasof by Attilio Labis, and sent it in great haste to this theatre where it scored a triumph. We will not dwell on its merits again. We will, however, satisfy ourselves by saying that a second viewing enables us to appreciate both the construction of the choreography and the variety of the *enchaînements* which are in perfect accord with Weber's score. Two of its most striking passages are the March and the *Barre* as danced by Madeleine Lafon supported by the linked arms of two partners. Produced by Van Dijk the dancers show lively virtuosity and dynamic gaiety.

ZAMBRA

CREATED in a Flamenco café in Madrid, Zambra had its first Paris season at the Théâtre des Champs Elysées. To preserve the spirit of the original spectacle the entire company came over to appear in the vast theatre, where a special stage had been erected. Thanks to skilful lighting and, above all, to the quality and fiery zest of the various performers very little of the essential original flavour was lost. Cleverly seated along the sides of their narrow stage for the Cuadro Flamenco, singers, dancers, and guitarists presented an everchanging panorama of their magic art. During the performance of *Cante chico* of which the first part consists, the audience, more and more bewitched, applauded the *Tanguillo gitan* of the tiny Carmela Abadia, El Tuve for the amazing frenzy which he brought to his furious *Seguiriya,* Antonio Heredia's *Farucca,* the supple grace of Amapola, and also Maria Medina, Tere Oro, Loli Jimenez, Salome de Cordoba and Teresa Maya.

An *Anthology of Flamenco,* with its dazzling parade of brilliantly-coloured frothing skirts, was followed by "Cante jondo", presented with authority by Rosa Duran, with the singers Romero, Varea and Jarrito. Dressed severely in black with a camelia in her hair, she danced with attack, savagery and seduction, filling in the nuances with a play of heel and arm movements — as if for some strange *corrida,* whose movements she depicts with dignity and passion.

NEWS IN BRIEF

ON January 27, the Paris Opéra staged for the first time *La Dame aux Camélias*, music by Sauguet, décors by Jacques Dupont, choreography by Tatiana Gzovsky, with Yvette Chauviré and George Skibine as its two principals. Harald Lander's *Qarrtsiluni* also received its first performance at the Opéra on this programme.

CLAIRE SOMBERT and Peter Van Dijk danced *La Fille Mal Gardée* at Marseilles on January 8 and 10.

IMMEDIATELY following his return from Mexico, Marcel Marceau and his company left on January 10 for a tour embracing Portugal, Israel, Germany, Austria, Holland, and finally India. In September they are scheduled to go to the United States for a four months' tour.

ON January 22, the Théâtre de Rouen staged the first performance of *Le Roy fol*, a lyrical fresco with scenario by Cécil Saint-Laurent, music by Jacques Dupont and choreography by Jean Guelis. On the same day the Opéra de Mulhouse presented the new ballet, *Sept jours à New York* to Robert Bergmann's score.

CARMEN AMAYA and company returned to the Théâtre de l'Etoile on February 2.

Marie-Françoise Christout.

AMERICA

THE NEW YORK CITY BALLET'S WINTER SEASON

DURING its nine-week winter season, perhaps the most important in its history, the New York City Ballet presented *Panamerica*, an evening-length programme produced by five choreographers to music by eight Latin-American composers, as well as two earlier Balanchine ballets, *The Night Shadow* and *Theme and Variations* (the latter presented too late for review in this issue), new to the repertory of this company this season. In addition, the historic Balanchine-Graham collaboration, *Episodes*, was repeated five times. The major event of the season has been the return of the New York City Ballet's *prima ballerina assoluta*, Maria Tallchief, together with this season's guest appearances by Erik Bruhn, appearing through the courtesy of the Royal Danish Ballet. Obviously the City Center ballet audiences, like many others, are more interested in stars than chogeography, judging by the capacity houses whenever Tallchief, Bruhn or Graham appeared. Interestingly enough, the programme-seller during the intervals hawked the company's handsome new souvenir programme by shouting, "Get your souvenir programmes here. All the stars of the New York City Ballet — Tallchief, Graham and Bruhn." Quite obviously the company has other stars, too, notably its ballerinas Diana Adams, Allegra Kent, Violette Verdy, Patricia Wilde and Melissa Hayden (indeed it's difficult to think of another company at the moment that can equal or surpass the level of the New York City Ballet's six ranking ballerinas), its newest and brightest male star, Edward Villella, the always notable Francisco Moncion, as well as Nicholas Magallanes and Jonathan Watts.

NEW TRIUMPH FOR EPISODES

ASIDE from almost anything that Maria Tallchief and Erik Bruhn danced, the transcendent experience of this season, at least for this reviewer, have been the superb performances of *Episodes*, not only by Martha Graham and her company, but by the New York City Ballet Company in George Balanchine's sections. During the initial spring season, Balanchine's dancers performed this complex, inventive work as if they were strangers in a foreign land. Now, however, they have caught the essence and spirit of it and it is in their bones and sinews. Consequently, they have been dancing it as if it were a new language, and how superbly they have adapted themselves to it and mastered it! Replacing the indisposed Jacques D'Amboise, Francisco Moncion partnered Diana Adams in Webern's *Five Pieces, Opus 10* section with such authority, presence and dramatic power that their joint performance took on new overtones and no longer was there laughter, as heretofore, over the involved choreography. To the contrary it and they gave the Balanchine section a new dimension that seemed to affect both the audience and the balance of the ballet. Since this reviewer took a decidedly minority view of Balanchine's contribution to *Episodes* when it was first produced last season, it is indeed pleasant now to do an abrupt change of face and opinion, and state that this work has been for me the towering experience of the 1959-1960 season thus far. Of course, George Balanchine has always had the gift of being ahead of his time. Or, perhaps, he *is* his time and it has only taken some of us longer to realise it in the case of *Episodes*.

VARIATIONES CONCERTANTES: *Violette Verdy and Edward Villella in John Taras's new ballet, to Alberto Ginastera music, which was one of the creations of New York City Ballet's "Pan-America" programme at City Center.*

THE NIGHT SHADOW AND PAN AMERICA

A VERY welcome addition to the dramatic wing of the repertory has been the revival of *The Night Shadow*. Though the very Nordic Erik Bruhn gives the work dramatic significance, this ballet requires the romanticism and passion that we recall in George Skibine's definitive performance as the Poet. Indeed, in the present company, one wonders if Nicholas Magallanes might not well have been a happier choice for this rôle, which, of course, he originally created with Danilova. John Taras, as the Baron, was colourless, and only the glittering Jillana, as the Coquette, and the glorious Allegra Kent, as the sleep-walker, caught the initial impact of this ballet. André Levasseur's costumes missed being beautiful or *chic* because they were overwhelmed with glitter and garish colour, giving the guests the appearance of being *nouveau riche*. And, since Negro dancers are now recognised as equal artists in the field of American dance, the dance of the Blackamoors seemed in questionable taste as performed by Suki Schorer and William Weslow in burnt cork make-up.

The most ambitious programme of the season, *Panamerica*, represented an idea which sounds glorious on paper but which makes for an extremely dull and repetitious evening on the stage. Latin-American rhythms can, indeed, be intoxicating, but not at even their best can they fascinate for one-hundred-and-twenty-five minutes with only one interval. This is especially true when the ballets are all, for the most part, abstract. This Latin-American music, most of it gloriously exciting in its own right, was not, I feel certain, meant to be interpreted almost completely in terms of "music visualisation". As a matter of fact, it is indeed difficult, if not impossible, to impose the classic idiom on music that is primarily ethnic and primitive. (Contrarily, Martha Graham, José Limón and Doris Humphrey have treated Latin-American music with greater honour and have used it more creatively.) Certainly one of the most embarrassing moments of the season was watching Erik Bruhn and Patricia Wilde wiggle their hips through Balanchine's *Preludios Para Percussion* to music by Luis Escobar. It was likewise sad to see Maria Tallchief "going native" in Balanchine's *Danza Sinfonicas* to a score by Cuba's Julian Orbon. The only noteworthy aspect of the evening-length programme was Balanchine's highly inventive choreography devised for Diana Adams, Nicholas Magallanes and Francisco Moncion in *Sinfonia No. 5, for String Orchestra*, the score of Mexico's Carlos Chavez.

While it may be politically adroit to woo

South America at the moment (could a South American tour be a possibility for the New York City Ballet?), this programme, despite all the fanfare, can do little to further cement "good neighbour" relations.

TALLCHIEF AND BRUHN

NOT since the Bolshoi Ballet visited New York last Spring have there been such audience roars of approval as those that have greeted the return of Maria Tallchief and Erik Bruhn as Guest Artist. Opening night Tallchief and Bruhn in Balanchine's version of *Swan Lake* danced it like it has never been danced before. Dramatically this one-act ballet took on a new depth and, despite a minimum of rehearsals, one might have imagined that these stars had been dancing together for seasons, so close was their *rapport,* so impeccable was their technique. Unquestionably, Erik Bruhn *is* the premier *danseur noble* of the Western world of ballet, and his partnering of Tallchief, plus her continuing growth as an artist, made for an unforgettable experience in dance. Tallchief and Bruhn repeated their triumphs in Balanchine's *Symphony in C* and *Pas de Dix* and then Tallchief turned in her finest performance to date in *Firebird* which, for American audiences at least, she dances more gloriously than anyone of this generation. Indeed, this ballet, in Balanchine's revised version, is so much hers that it is now impossible to hear the music without seeing her dancing it in the mind's eye. Due to a leg injury, Erik Bruhn was forced to cancel his performances for the last two weeks of the season and Edward Villella replaced him in *Theme and Variations.*

GRAHAM RECEIVES AWARD

A DISTINGUISHED assemblage of notables in the world of dance, the theatre, music, the graphic arts and the dance press were guests of Ben Sommers, President of Capezio, the ballet-shoe manufacturers, at a recent luncheon at the St. Regis Hotel in New York when the Ninth Annual Capezio Dance Award was bestowed upon Martha Graham. The committee for this award comprised Anatole Chujoy, Editor of *Dance News*; Emily Coleman, Editor and Critic of *Newsweek*; Martha Hill, Director of the Dance Department of the Juilliard School of Music; and Walter Terry, Editor and Critic of the *New York Herald Tribune,* who cited Martha Graham as a "distinguished dancer, choreographer, innovator, who has never compromised in her pursuit of dance exploration and who has, over her years of service to dance in America, continuously expanded her horizons to include the first major programme-long work in modern dance, *Clytemnestra*; successful collaboration with the art of ballet in the Balanchine-Graham *Episodes*; and an impressive ambassadorship in taking her powerful version of American dance to audiences in Europe, the Middle East and the Orient."

William Schuman, President of the Juilliard School of Music, who composed three major works for Martha Graham — *Night Journey, Judith* and *Voyage* — made the presentation in which he summed up this distinguished career so superbly that only an excerpt can do justice to his tribute: "She has created an original vocabulary of dance movement that has added a new dimension to the expressivity of the choreographic art.

"She has been gloriously incapable, ever, of being slight, captious or superficial. Her works — whether tragic or comic — always probe, distill and illuminate.

"She has epitomised what it means to be an artist. Always she has served the idea, the vision and the road to fulfilment has admitted no detour for the expedient.

"She has given of her knowledge, her wisdom and her energy to instruct the young. And in the larger sense of her leadership she has been the teacher of us all.

"She continues to create with undiminished zeal. Each new work brings the excitement of discovery of previously unexplored facets of her endlessly fertile imagination.

"For these reasons she has achieved a position which is not adequately to be described solely as one of pre-eminence in her field. For whether we speak of the world of dance, of music, of literature, or of the graphic arts, Martha Graham is one of the greatest artists America has ever produced."

In acknowledging the Capezio Dance Award and the citation, Martha Graham announced that the accompanying gift of one thousand dollars was being used to commission a new dance score by Carlos Surinach that would be presented during her Spring season. Meanwhile, as we go to press, Martha Graham and her dance company have completed her third film for television and the art theatres, *Night Journey,* with a score by William Schuman which was conducted for its screen version by Robert Irving, Musical Director of the New York City Ballet.

DANISH-AMERICAN PARTNERSHIP: Erik Bruhn and Maria Tallchief in New York City Ballet's production of Swan Lake. *Photo: Martha Swope.*

HONOUR FOR ROBBINS

SINCE Jerome Robbins and his Ballets: U.S.A. have returned from their triumphal tour of Europe, three sections of *Opus: Jazz* have been televised nationally on the Ed Sullivan programme. Moreover, a signal honour was bestowed upon Jerome Robbins by Mayor Robert F. Wagner and the City of New York in the presentation of an official scroll and citation hailing him as "Master of the arts of theatre and ballet; distinguished director and choreographer who has brought together Americans of various races, creeds and colours in his company, Ballets: U.S.A.; who has created for its repertory a brilliant fusion of classic

and contemporary dance ; gifted son of New York in whom his native city takes deep pride ; emissary of the United States who has contributed immeasurably in demonstrating the originality and vitality of American cultural achievement and who, through his art, has gained for his country increased international understanding and goodwill."

At the same time it was announced from Moscow that Russia plans to present its own version of *West Side Story* this year. "We are making our own presentation," claims Deputy Cultural Minister Alexander Kuznetsov, as reported in *The New York Times*. "The music will be used only as an incorporated element. The play will be preserved, but will be presented as the director sees it." Since there is no copyright agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union, it may well be impossible to prohibit an unsanctioned version in the Soviet Union. Speaking on this plan to omit most of this musical's dancing and music in Russia, Jerome Robbins stated : "They must have no conception what made the show such an unusual theatre piece."

In the meantime, *West Side Story* has been enjoying a tremendous success in its cross-country tour of America, and it now appears likely that this company will return to the Winter Garden Theatre in New York for another engagement, a rare event indeed in the annals of Broadway productions.

ROYAL BALLET RETURN TO U.S.

MARKING the eleventh anniversary of the company's American début (the historic night was October 9, 1949), impresario Sol Hurok announces that the Royal Ballet will return for its sixth tour of the United States. This tour will open with a four-week engagement at the Metropolitan Opera House, beginning September 11, and a national tour, to run an expected 16 weeks, is planned to take the company to the West Coast and Canada.

Dame Margot Fonteyn will perform at the Met. in her new status with the company as Guest Artist. The company will feature among its ballerinas Nadia Nerina, Svetlana Beriosova, Anya Linden and Annette Page. The male contingent, again headed by Michael Somes, will include Brian Shaw, Alexander Grant, David Blair, Bryan Ashbridge, Donald MacLeary, Desmond Doyle, Gary Burne and Ronald Hynd. It has been announced that the full-length *Sleeping Beauty* and *Le Lac de Cygnes* will be included in the repertory, but as yet there has been no announcement regarding *Ondine* and *La Fille Mal Gardée*.

SOLOV'S BALLET ENSEMBLE

ZACHARY SOLOV, choreographer for the Metropolitan Opera, is forming a Ballet Ensemble of ten dancers and two pianists for which impresario Sol Hurok plans a national tour next season. The Metropolitan Opera's chief choreographer since 1951, Zachary Solov will create at least two new ballets for this group. One is *Orfeo ed Eurydice*, based on his dances for the Metropolitan's production of the Gluck opera, but extended to tell the entire story. Another will be *Fireworks* to the music of Franz Liszt.

BALLET THEATRE EXHIBITION

THE Committee for the Dance Collection of the New York Public Library staged a celebration on February 3 in honour of the American Ballet Theatre on the occasion of its Twentieth Anniversary. Also on view in conjunction with this celebration is an exhibition of books, prints, photographs, costume and stage designs pertaining to the history of this company which made its début on January 11, 1940.

ALVIN AILEY, whose group recently presented a highly successful performance at the YM-YWHA in New York, to be reviewed next month. Photo : Zachary Freyman.

American Ballet Theatre's twentieth anniversary will be observed this Spring with a season at the Metropolitan Opera House. After this, it is planned for the company to go to Russia — the first American ballet company to perform in the Soviet Union. In addition, Lucia Chase announces that there will be a twenty-three-week European tour. This will be the eighth international tour and the fourth under the auspices of the U.S. State Department for this company.

NEWS IN BRIEF

TOO late for review in this issue, Alvin Ailey, the highly gifted young American-Negro dancer and his company presented a performance at the YM-YWHA that was highlighted by three new works. Among these were Milhaud's *Création du Monde*, featuring Matt Turney, a soloist for many seasons with Martha Graham's company, who appeared opposite Alvin Ailey in this ballet based on the Adam and Eve legend. Two of the additional works newly created by this young dancer-choreographer were *Sonera*, a series of abstract dances set to the chamber music of Cuban composer Alejandro Garcia Caturla, and *Revelations*, a theatre piece dealing with the history and imagery of the Negro spiritual.

Other notable dance concerts have been Charles Weidman's at the Henry Street Playhouse and Merce Cunningham's at the Phoenix Theatre.

HANYA HOLM, choreographer for *My Fair Lady*, is staging the dances and musical numbers for *Christine*, the Pearl Buck musical with an Indian locale.

Arthur Todd.

LA FILLE MAL GARDEE

DECOR

(continued from page 13)

It's all very well, I can hear you muttering, to carry-on about the designing but, granted Derain is dead, who else do you think could have done better ? Well now, there is Lila de Nobili (yes, I *know* she has just done *Ondine* with Ashton, but they work wonderfully together, she is a complete Romantic and after all Ashton used Fedorovitch on several ballets in succession), there is Jean Hugo (yes, I *know* he no longer designs for the theatre but given a sympathetic subject he could be persuaded), then there is James Bailey (also a Romantic if he could be levered out of his recent pink and sugar phase), and what about the Ironside brothers (possibly not ideal, but their second act of *Sylvia* showed that they, too, had a real understanding of Romanticism). And, of course, Zeffirelli has designed, for Covent Garden operas, some of the finest Romantic settings that this century has yet produced. And what about the father of them all — Alexandre Benois? Anyway, here are a few names to conjure with when the present designs wear out, and wear out they most assuredly will because the Royal Ballet has a real hit on its hands.

Peter Williams.

PERFORMANCE DETAILS

Running Time

Act 1 : 64 minutes. Act II : 35 minutes.

Audience Reaction

19 calls on the first night, including five with the lights on. 17 calls on the second performance. 15 calls on the third. General, enthusiastic cheering at all three performances.

Press Reaction

6 stars — rave ; 5 stars — enthusiastic ; 4 stars — favourable ; 3 stars — lukewarm ; 2 stars — unfavourable ; 1 star — pan.

Daily Express *****; *Daily Mail* ******; *Daily Telegraph* ****; *Evening News* ******; *Evening Standard* ****; *Financial Times* ******; *The Guardian* ******; *News Chronicle* ******; *Observer* *****; *The Star* *****; *Sunday Times* *****; *The Times* ******.

TAGLIONI IN DUBLIN

Continued from page 23

"Last night was produced the long-expected ballet *La Sylphide*. The indulgence of the audience is always extended on the first night of the production of a new pantomime or ballet; but we must say we never witnessed such a trespass on it in one respect as last night. The delay, not only before the curtain rose, but between the acts, was really fatiguing. It put the audience almost out of humour; and it required all the splendours of scenery and decorations, in addition to the beautiful dancing, to restore the equanimity of the house.

"The construction of the plot is extremely simple. La Sylphide is enamoured of a Scottish peasant (James Rubens), whose faith has been solemnly plighted to Effie. La Sylphide — a *Calypso* in her way — allures the object of her attachment to the place of her own dwelling — a very fairy-land in representation — but before she has succeeded in guiling away the faith of the fickle-hearted Rubens, through the interposition of a Weird Sister, the real character of La Sylphide is manifested. The conclusion is somewhat abrupt. We think our young friends through the house would have wished the usual termination of all fairy romances. This is a very compressed epitome of the subject of the ballet. Making allowances for the incidental awkwardness of a first representation, the piece was triumphantly successful. The scenery, which is limited, is very beautiful. The last scene is delightfully illusive. The *corps de ballet* is greatly improved, and acquitted themselves with great credit. The piece was loudly applauded, and given out for repetition amid loud acclamation.

"Of Taglioni it is needless for us to speak. Her performance, if possible, enhanced the opinion we have already expressed of her surprising powers. Her *La Sylphide* was indeed, all that could be looked for in a being of that charmed land in which she is made to dwell.

"Miss Garbois acquitted herself with great credit. She was loudly applauded throughout her admirable performance. She was most efficiently supported by Miss Harvey. The house was much the best of the season — crowded to excess.

"Taglioni was obliged, at the termination of the performance, to make obeisance to the audience, in compliance with a most absurd custom of the galleries."

A few days later the same critic was still rhapsodising over Taglioni's Sylphide — "the astonishing ease, gracefulness and winning gentleness, that so appropriately characterise Mademoiselle Taglioni's dancing in this ballet — the union of such rare qualities forming

That loveliness, ever in motion which plays,
Like the light upon autumn's soft shadowy days."

The final production served up by Filippo Taglioni for the Dubliners was Auber's ballet-opera *La Bayadère,* of which *The Freeman's Journal* recorded:

"Mademoiselle Taglioni performed the part of Zelica, a Cashmerean and Bayadère, or dancer, and truly her gracefulness, and the beauteous though dumb eloquence of her motions, well merited the prize accorded to them in the ballet — we mean the hand of the Sultan. We were particularly pleased with the scene in which a contention for superiority in dancing is entered into by Fatima (Miss Garbois), and Zelica. In this scene Mademoiselle Taglioni called forth her unrivalled powers, and absolutely entranced her auditors with delight. Brilliant, and beautiful, and easy movements succeeded each other with such rapidity that the eye could hardly follow with sufficient quickness the various charming exhibitions of gracefulness, joined with gazelle-like activity, presented to it. We hardly knew whether most to admire throughout the ballet the power of muscle and brilliancy of step, or the inexpressible air of easy gracefulness maintained by Mademoiselle Taglioni — the one surprised, while the other charmed us."

If the critic held reservations about the ballet, he certainly had none so far as Taglioni was concerned:

"As regards plot, music, and general effect, it is infinitely inferior to *La Sylphide,* which we trust may be substituted for it, before the public have more reason to be tired of its incongruities. The introduced shawl dance is particularly beautiful, as are also one or two other scenes, which, however attractive they may be, are hardly sufficient to sustain the ballet, of which they are the sole ornaments. Mademoiselle Taglioni danced admirably; indeed, he must be a very Zoilus who can discover a blemish in the most careless of her harmonious motions. Her attitudes and pantomimic action are perfection itself. Whether she would indicate the emotions of love springing from a heart new to its influence — the hoydenish vivacity of a playful girl joining in broad mirth and amusement, merely for its own sake — or the deep and sorrowful feeling engendered in the female mind, when contumely is the return for ardent affection, she is equally expressive, finished, and indeed instructive."

COVER STORIES

This month's front cover, by Mike Davis, is of Dianne Richards and John Gilpin of London's Festival Ballet in the Harlequinade pas de deux **which they dance together during the company's provincial tour prior to leaving for South America.**

DIANNE RICHARDS was born in Northern Rhodesia in 1934. After studying with Marjorie Sturman in Johannesburg, she came to England and joined London's Festival Ballet in 1951. Four years later she was promoted to junior soloist and today she is listed as one of the company's principal dancers. Her first starring rôle was in this particular *Harlequinade pas de deux,* which she took over from Belinda Wright. In this rôle she also achieved a considerable success on TV.

She has created a number of other rôles in the Festival Ballet repertory and has always been noticeable for her technique and her soubrette charm.

JOHN GILPIN was born in Southsea in 1930 and first studied there with Tina Pearce. Later he was awarded a scholarship to the Cone-Ripman School (now the Arts Educational School) and there he won most of the awards and medals that any British dancer can. It was here that he also studied to become an actor and he appeared in films, amongst them *They Were Sisters,* and in plays, amongst them *The Years Between,* as a child. In 1945 he joined Ballet Rambert, where he immediately became a principal, dancing in the classics and creating rôles in ballets by Howard and Gore. It was during Rambert's Australian tour that Gilpin consolidated his position as an important male dancer.

Returning to Europe after two years, he then joined Roland Petit's Ballets de Paris and later the company of the Marquis de Cuevas. In 1950 he came to England as principal male dancer in the then newly-formed Festival Ballet, and it is in this company, with which he has remained until today, that he has achieved great international fame. As well as dancing all the classical rôles, he has also created a number of new ones, principally in *The Witch Boy, Etudes, Symphony for Fun* and *Vision of Marguerite* amongst numerous others. He has partnered most of the great ballerinas of this era, at one time or another, and is generally considered to be one of the greatest male stars Britain has ever had.

Ballet Dates

THE ROYAL BALLET
at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden

February
20 **(M)** *Coppélia* (Linden, Blair), *Façade*
23 *Le Lac des Cygnes* (Linden, Blair)
25 *Danses Concertantes, Giselle* (Fonteyn, Somes)
27 **(M)** *Danses Concertantes, Giselle* (Page, Hynd)
27 **(E)** *Les Rendezvous, Petrushka, Pineapple Poll*

March
1 Annual Gala in aid of the Royal Ballet Benevolent Fund
3 *Le Lac des Cygnes* (Page, Hynd)
5 **(M)** *Ballabile, Giselle* (Seymour, Trecu)
5 **(E)** *Ballabile, Giselle* (Fonteyn, Somes)
8 *Ondine* (Fonteyn, Somes)
9 *Antigone, Les Rendezvous, Petrushka*
11 *Ballabile, Giselle* (Fonteyn, Somes)
12 **(M)** *Le Lac des Cygnes* (Seymour, Blair)
14 *Ondine* (Fonteyn, Somes)
17 *Les Sylphides, Antigone, Ballabile*
19 **(M)** *Le Lac des Cygnes* by students of the Royal Ballet School
19 **(E)** *Ondine* (Fonteyn, Somes)
26 **(E)** *Les Rendezvous, La Fille Mal Gardée* (Nerina, Blair)
28 *Le Lac des Cygnes* (Beriosova, MacLeary)

April
1 *Les Rendezvous, La Fille Mal Gardée* (Nerina, Blair)
2 **(M)** *Danses Concertantes, Giselle* (Linden, Blair)
2 **(E)** *Ondine* (Fonteyn, Somes)
2 **(E)** *Ondine* (Fonteyn, Somes)
6 *Danses Concertantes, Giselle* (Fonteyn, Somes)
12 *La Fête Etrange, Le Baiser de la Fée* (Première), *Pineapple Poll*
13 *Ondine* (Fonteyn, Somes)
16 **(M)** *La Fête Etrange, Le Baiser de la Fée, Les Rendezvous*
18 *Ballabile, Antigone, Pineapple Poll*
21 *Ballabile, Le Baiser de la Fée, La Fête Etrange*
23 **(E)** *Les Rendezvous, Giselle* (Fonteyn, Somes)

The above programmes are subject to alteration. Please check with daily press.

BALLET RAMBERT

February
29 King's Theatre, Southsea

March
7 The Palace, Watford
14 The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry
21 The Opera House, Leicester
28 Essoldo Theatre, Southport

April
4 Her Majesty's Theatre, Carlisle

May
23 The Theatre Royal, Norwich

LONDON'S FESTIVAL BALLET

February
15 The Hippodrome, Brighton
22 The Memorial Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon
29 The Hippodrome, Golders Green

March 11 — May 31
South American tour, including seasons in Mexico City, Caracas, Lima, Santiago, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janiero, Sao Paulo

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an open meeting at the Arts Council, 4 St. James's Square, London, on March 6, at 7.30 p.m.

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NERVI (Genoa): Company directed by Leonide Massine, July 8 to 28.
July 8-10: *Decameron*
13-14: *Il Barbiere de Siviglia*
16-17: *Les Sylphides, Bal des Voleurs, Scheherazade*
22-14: *Cimarosiana, Choreatium, Le Beau Danube*

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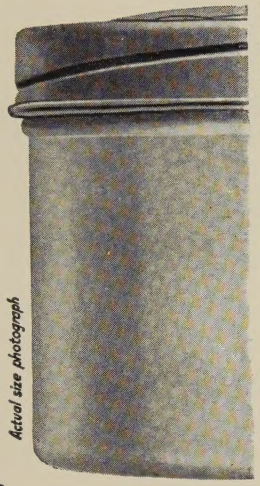

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